

Waiting

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 world waits for a vaccine. As our nation waits for a transfer of power. As growing multitudes wait (impatiently, unwillingly, and with protest and demands) for racial justice, gender equity, environmental healing and much more. As we all now wait to visit loved ones, to gather in community, to sing in our sanctuary again. We enter December and this Advent season with more than the usual amount of waiting.

Patience is growing thin. Have you noticed? As daylight grows shorter and the winter chill sets in, we wonder, how long can we wait for relief? How do we distinguish between the injustice of waiting that for African Americans has “almost always meant never,” in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, words, and the waiting that theologian Paul Tillich insisted “is not despair,” but “the acceptance of our not having, in the power of that which we already have.”

What is this “power of that which we already have” nested in “our not having”?

The word “wait” traces its origins to Old Germanic roots meaning to be *watchful*, and to *observe carefully*, related to the origins of the word “wake.” Sometimes, in the middle of night, I lie awake wondering what is it we are watching for in this year of extended waiting? And would it be any easier to wait if I knew?

In the stories of this season, the waiting is mostly for unknown outcomes. The early northern peoples, fearing the disappearance of the sun at winter solstice, built their fires high because they did not know if longer daylight would return. The Maccabees

rededicating the desecrated temple, found just one day’s oil in the jar and lit the lamp anyway not knowing how it could possibly last the eight-day wait for more oil to arrive. The Israelites waiting for a king, did not know a powerful new leader would be conceived out of wedlock and born homeless, sharing shelter with the animals.

If we are watchful today, if we slow down enough to observe carefully what is changing, not only around us but within us, might we begin to glimpse the “power of that which we already have”? The power of a new world order already in the making. The power of imagination igniting and illuminating new understandings of community and deep connection standing up to fear and greed. The power of love reaching out across the distances of our times — not just six-foot “social distancing” but especially spanning the asocial distancing of “othering” so contagiously spreading through our world.

The Christmas story reminds us that new ways of being are often born in unexpected times and places, of surprising parentage and with persistent light rising from the shadows of dire scarcity and despair. To wait faithfully for change like that is to wake up, alerted to the signs of something new already unfolding. To shed our expectations of how and when and where it will appear and to prepare ourselves by being watchful, like shepherds and kings, making great effort to find it, and to welcome and honor it on bended knee when we do.

In May Sarton’s poem, “Beyond the Question,” she describes the faithful

waiting of a bird’s dedicated watchful tending of its nest:

*But one must first become small,
Nothing but a presence,
Attentive as a nesting bird,
Proffering no slightest wish
Toward anything
that might happen or be given,
Only the warm, faithful waiting,
contained in one’s smallness.*

How might this year’s season of waiting, begun long before December and likely to stretch well beyond it, call each of us to bring the warmth of our presence and attention to our nested hopes for wellness and peace, for justice and love? Can we endure the unknowns of this time long enough to give birth to a powerful new way of being?

“Our time is a time of waiting; waiting is its special destiny,” Tillich said. “And every time is a time of waiting, waiting for the breaking in of eternity.”

In every candle that we light against December’s darkness, in every song we sing or hear, in every loving word of sorrow or of cheer, in every wakeful night of wonder or of fear, may our warm and faithful waiting open our hearts to a new beginning already present, stirring among us and within us in this watchful time.

By Karen Hering on behalf of this month’s theme team: Drew Danielson, Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs, Ray Hommeyer, KP Hong, Ruth MacKenzie and Laura Park.

Waiting Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme visit www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html.

Just Words



This year I am particularly grateful that we set aside a season just to help us learn to wait. Janne and I are off to Portland for a week this coming Friday. Between a looming deadline and the need to put the work down for a little while and concentrate on moving into the house we will actually occupy come June, I am writing this in the afternoon of November 7. Pennsylvania was just declared for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris and even though I know our work is still cut out for us, I weep for joy that decency has triumphed. There are things worth waiting for.

Each morning in the dark before dawn, I write a brief reflection. I use a format I learned from Harry Scholefield, a colleague and mentor of mine and of many others including Laurel Hallman with whom he created a compelling approach to spiritual direction called “Living by Heart.” In musing about his own daily practice Harry says, “Sometimes the poets come. Sometimes they don’t.” This morning as I anticipated the season of waiting the Christians call Advent, Wendell Berry, the great wizened poet/farmer, dropped by in my mind to remind me of his exquisite poem “To Tanya at Christmas.” It grounds me so deeply in what really matters most to me that I want to offer it to you as a gift. Read it aloud. Learn it by heart.

*Forgive me my delight,
that grief and loneliness
have kept me. Though I come
to you in darkness, you are
companion of the light
that rises on all I know.*

*In the long night of the year
and of the spirit, God’s birth
is met with simple noise.
Deaf and blind in division,
I reach, and do not find.
You show the gentler way:
We come to good by love;
our words must be made flesh.*

*And flesh must be made word
at last, our lives rise
in speech to our children’s tongues.
They will tell how we once stood
together here, two trees
whose lives in annual sheddings
made their way into this ground,
whose bodies turned to earth
and song. The song will tell
how old love sweetens the fields.*

May all our waiting be for blessing. May your practice take hold and give you strength and wisdom for the days ahead.

With love at the turning of the year,
Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Ethel Griggs

November 1, 1941 –
November 20, 2020

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DECEMBER SERVICES

Sunday Worship and Coffee Hour

While our building remains closed, multigenerational Sunday Services are being live-streamed from the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. Details and links, including access to past services, are available online at www.unityunitarian.org.

Each Sunday, everyone is welcome to join a virtual Zoom coffee hour after the service. To participate in the coffee hour, please use this link: <https://bit.ly/unitycoffeehour>. If you would like to receive our congregational emails, please sign up here: <https://bit.ly/ucuemailsignup>.

December 6: *Waiting in the Uncertainty*

Livestream link: https://youtu.be/cJRpmcJoV_Y

Americans have proven over and over again how badly we are at waiting. Some things like justice, are not worth waiting for any longer. But now in the midst of the pandemic, we are being asked to make sacrifices and live into more uncertainty. Are we, as a people, up to this spiritual challenge? Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Rebecca Flood will wrestle with this difficult questions and its challenges. Offering recipient: Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism

December 13: *Be Here Now. Really?*

Livestream link: https://youtu.be/Ox9m72W_2Ok

How do we cultivate the ability to “Be here now” when we might rather be someplace else in some other time? Rev Karen Hering and worship associate Shelley Butler explore the fruits — and challenges — of being present to the here and now, even in difficult times and especially as we work to create a better future. Offering recipient: Penumbra Theatre

December 20: *People Get Ready*

Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/NXeoJV7W64>

In these strange days of physical distance, the usual festivities have to be set aside. The blessing hidden beneath our disappointment is that the essence of the turning still remains. As we await the birth of wonder, the whole church family will gather for our traditional carol shout (video requests are welcome and expected, see page 15). The service, conducted by the ministers and worship associate Katrina Nichols, will tell the story of Las Posadas as we open heart and hearth to the homeless stranger who turns out to be God. Offering recipient: Casa Guadalupana

December 27: *A Cry Went Out from Ramah: The Hidden Losses*

Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/2J2MOLqm8RI>

Many people around the globe plan on families. Some plan on large families. For some, this reality does not come to pass. Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Lia Rivamonte will illuminate and highlight all the losses that go on in community, often largely unacknowledged. Offering recipient: Minneapolis Crisis Nursery

Details about his month's offering recipients are available on page 13.

Blue Holidays Service

Wednesday, December 16

7:00 p.m.

Register: <https://bit.ly/blueholidays>

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 a gathering of poetry, music, mediation, and sharing.

Christmas Eve Services



Find A Stillness • 10:00 a.m.

Livestream link:

<https://youtu.be/dsDhiUywy0>

Come gather on Christmas Eve morning as we search for that still-point at the center of our lives. There will be extended periods of silence to provide time for relief and contemplation. The service will include an invitation to join in conversation and communion.

Christmas Pageant • 4:00 p.m.

Watch for a link to view on Christmas Eve!

Following a special introduction, we invite you to enjoy a reprise of the 100th Unity Christmas Pageant Anniversary video. We regret that Covid makes it unsafe to assemble the cast this year. But fear not! The pageant will return in all its glory once the pandemic is over.

Family Lessons & Carols • 7:00 p.m.

Livestream link:

<https://youtu.be/5yY8SBqXxWA>

Come hear lessons old and new as we share selections from the Gospels and poems that for us are also gospel. Join in the familiar carols, kindle a candle, and celebrate the silent night when God takes on flesh and walks among us once again.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / 2021 PLEDGE DRIVE



Impatience and Action

Jackie Smith, Board Chair

As we move into the darker days, the idea of waiting is so present for me. As a person who is much more inclined to action than patience, this waiting time is uncomfortable and challenging. Waiting for the election to resolve, for a vaccine to be ready, for the resolution of family concerns. Waiting for the cold to hit, for days to lengthen, for a chance to see my

friends again. All of this waiting...

We cannot wait when it comes to reaching our Ends and our commitment to building the Beloved Community. With this in mind, the board engaged with the Intercultural Development Inventory and the accompanying plans of action and transformation. This summer and fall the trustees took the IDI, conferred with facilitators about the group results, and held individual conferences with the facilitators to understand our individual results. The trustees were ready to dig deeper and engage in transformative work, both personally and as a board. We also wanted to challenge facilitators Betsy Hearn and Kelly Nelson to pilot a framework that could be used with other teams at Unity Church. The result was a three session series integrating work from the pulpit, readings, writing prompts, and small group conversation that really impacted the individuals and collective outlook of the trustees. In examining our own culture, we wrote "I am from" poems. Any educator knows about these poems, and engaging anew in this exercise was powerful. Both writing and hearing the poems brought us closer to ourselves and one another.

I am from

I am from sky high Jack Pines and the low level rush of wind cutting through the needles, even on a still day.

I'm from glacial water, so cold it makes an up north lake feel like a bathtub.

I am from the Dakota prairies, waiting for a break in the wind to finish my story. It never comes.

I am from the later learning that it was not just Montana, Minnesota, South Dakota, but Salish Kootenai, Anishinabewaki, and Oceti Sakowin for generations before that. What else don't I know?

I am from government cheese and whole-grain bread "what's time to a pig?," "average is pretty low," and "come in for dinner when the sun hits that tree."

I am from "hurry up," and "get it right."

I am from riding my pink dirt bike in circles, from the weeping willow hiding us friends, whispering secrets as the daylight fades.

I am from step families, more people equals more love.

I am from disorganized but safely kept photos.

I am from waiting on the porch for cousins to arrive, long before the days of cell phones.

I am from long car trips, switching cassette tapes as we rotate around the car.

Gordon Lightfoot, Janice Joplin, Prince, the Grateful Dead, U2, Indigo Girls, and "Who sings this? "

I'm from Grandma Ina with her too tight hugs smelling of Downy which belied the OCD that ruled her spotless, ordered world. And grandma Ila smelling of sugar cookies with distance, no hugs, busyness, hiding her addictions. Both of them with stories locked up taken to the graves.

I am from the reconstruction of those stories, between my sister and me. Shared on a walk, on the dock, in the water, holding the stories and creating new.

I am very grateful for the effort of all the trustees and facilitators in their work, and I hope that we have contributed to a model that the church can engage in the future. This is something that cannot wait.



Amazing! This year's pledge drive has been nothing short of that.

As of the writing of this article, more than 583 of you have generously pledged, helping us reach approximately 92.5% of our 2021 operating budget goal of \$1.35 million. This is a significant accomplishment, made possible because of the dedication and generosity of so many. Thank you to those who have pledged!

If you haven't pledged yet, it's important we hear from you soon. The 2021 budget was presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting last month, with the expectation that your pledge would make a difference in the final financial projections for next year.

Please mail your pledge card to the church or pledge online promptly. Information and pledge forms are available at www.unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html.

Thank you for your generous gifts. Thank you for being a part of this amazing community.

Consider a Year-end Gift

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/ucuyarend2020> (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!

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Equity + Justice Fall Series with Team Dynamics, Part II

Pauline Eichten, on behalf of the Beloved Community Staff Team



Every Tuesday night over the course of seven weeks in September and October, some 200 people participated in at least one of a series of workshops led

by Team Dynamics (<https://www.teamdynamicsmn.com/>). This is part of Unity's work toward realizing our Ends — to create a multicultural spiritual home and space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture. In last month's newsletter, we shared an overview of the first four workshops. Here we'll offer a brief overview of the last three, as well as some reflections from participants.

The fifth workshop, *Social Change + Social Movements*, described social movements as a contest of values and ideas. Unity's movement toward an antiracist multicultural spiritual community rises out of three values: intersectionality and complexity of identities; interconnection, not alienation; and interdependence, not extreme individuality. The workshop also introduced the need to lead with a positive vision, a "Wow" statement that expresses the desired outcome that motivates us — or as presenter Alfonso Wenker said, "gives us goose bumps."

Workshop six, *Organizing + Action*, defined organizing as people casting a vision, building relationships, amassing resources and then using those to effect a transformation. It also identified a feedback loop as critical, asking, "Are we willing to be changed by what we learn? Who are our messages for? Is what we're doing working?"

The final workshop reviewed the tools and content from previous sessions and included a call to accountability. Each participant was asked to consider one area of focus and examine what they might do differently given what they had learned. As in every workshop,

there was an opportunity to share with others in a smaller breakout group.

We took the need for feedback to heart, wondering how participants felt about these workshops and what we might learn from them. We sent out a survey to everyone who had registered. Our return rate was about 11%. Using the format modeled by Team Dynamics, we asked people to *identify one thing they were grateful for and one commitment they had made*.

Expressions of gratitude included:

- the opportunity to learn with other church members,
- the quality of engagement by participants, and
- learning that mistakes are part of growth.

Among the stated commitments were to:

- continue learning about my culture and identities,
- improve my understanding of the complex issues related to racial justice, and
- move from learning to action.

One person wants to become "ever mindful of my white culture, the characteristics ... I manifest in social situations, and to 'tame' the manifestations so they don't interfere with relationship building."

We asked workshop participants, *did the series help you connect to Unity's work toward racial justice?*

Overall, survey respondents reported a greater appreciation and understanding of the work Unity has been doing. As one participant put it, "I knew that Unity's investment in this work was a proper priority. This series helped illuminate 'why' and explain some of the internal work that we need to be doing." Another respondent said framing the Ends as a social movement was "a whole different way to understand both what the goal is and how to get there as a congregation."

One participant wanted to hear more about how to apply the ideas presented within the church, building on what currently exists, and looks forward to ongoing conversations.

Next, we asked participants *what might be your "next right action"?* Responses to this question included:

- supporting leadership transition at Unity Church with multicultural and racial justice Ends in mind,
- doing volunteer work with organizations led by people of color, and
- building relationships across racial and cultural differences.

Participants were also asked, *was there something you discovered about yourself during the series?*

One participant discovered that, "I don't know very much, but I can get through the discomfort and learn." In the same vein, another person noted "how bereft all my formal education has been, and how, without even knowing it, I allowed my white privilege to protect me from knowing."

Identifying one's conflict style and mode of cultural expression was an "a-ha" moment for some. One direct and expressive communicator learned they were in the minority. Another recognized that their conflict style could be alienating to those with different styles.

These were rich sessions with much to learn and understand about ourselves and how white dominant culture affects our thinking and behavior. Please stay tuned as the Beloved Community Staff Team coordinates next steps in the ongoing work of becoming an antiracist multicultural spiritual community.

*Thanks to Shelley Butler for creating the survey form and the report of responses.

WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality

The journey to membership at Unity Church is so very individual. Some people know within two weeks that Unity Church is the right place to develop their spiritual practice within, among, and beyond, and they commit easily to that work and to the support of the institution that helps them practice. Other people support the institution but take 40 years to take the final step of signing the membership book. Still others orbit the church at a distance until something pushes them closer or farther away.

If you're in the waiting time before the membership commitment, what could make that waiting fruitful for you? What's the version of watchful waiting, of preparation, of seeing and listening that will help you discern what relationship with the church will help you grow in the ways your heart seeks? In addition to the classes at right, you may want to consider joining the Wellspring spiritual development class I'll be leading with congregant Susan Huehn, beginning in January. This class invites you into a year of engagement with a five-spoke model of spiritual deepening: daily spiritual practice, regular meetings of the Wellspring group, engagement with Unitarian Universalist history and theology, meeting monthly with a one-on-one spiritual director, and discerning our unique call in life. See page 8 for more details, and email Martha Tilton at martha@unityunitarian.org with your interest in participating.

My virtual door is always open for conversation, information, and exploration of your pathway into deeper meaning in our religious community. The best way to contact me right now is email, if possible, laura@unityunitarian.org. Or call the church office and leave a message: 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

Mentoring at Unity

A Path to Deeper Connection

Would you welcome having a guide to congregational life at Unity Church? Request a mentor! Your mentor will meet with you at least once a month face-to-face and be available for ongoing questions and advice. You can decide together what connection would be most helpful. You might attend Sunday services together or meet to discuss Unitarian Universalism and your spiritual journeys, or attend a church event together, or find another way to connect. Each pair makes a commitment to work together for at least six months.

If you have questions, or would like to request a mentor, please email Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org.

Pathway to Membership Classes

The offerings below invite you to explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. If you have questions or would like one-on-one conversation about getting connected or about membership, please contact Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality, laura@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays Online • 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Finding Yourself at Unity includes eight classes that you can attend in any order to better understand how Unity Church supports our faith journeys, our work to build Beloved Community, and our efforts to bless the world. Topics include: UU History; Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults; Pastoral Care; Q&A with a Minister; Worship and the Liturgical Year; Social Justice & Community Outreach; Membership 101 and Congregational Life, and even an online Building Tour! Sunday morning emails include the class topic and a Zoom link to get connected.

December 6: Membership 101

December 13: Q&A with the Minister

December 20: Worship and Liturgical Life

December 27: No class

Committing to Unity

Thursday, December 3 • 7:00-9:00 p.m.

*I had **never** joined churches I attended. When I came to Unity, I felt like I had a social justice home and wanted to contribute as much as I could . . . I did it to "step forward" and stand shoulder to shoulder with those who stood for justice, integrity, service, and joy.*

Does this quote from a recent member of Unity Church sound familiar? Are you ready to make the membership commitment? This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. It offers time to reflect on the meaning of generosity and how you can discover the places in your life where the world's need meets the gifts and joy you have to offer. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book (virtually if necessary) and officially join the church! RSVP by email to Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Sunday Coffee Hour

After the service you are invited to participate in a virtual Zoom coffee hour, where we share a bit of our lives with each other and get to know one another more deeply. Join on Sundays after the 10:00 a.m. service here: <https://bit.ly/unitycoffeehour>.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS / EVERGREEN QUILTERS

Welcome New Members



Steven Larson
I started attending Unity Church one year ago after my wife and I moved from White Bear

Lake to Saint Paul. Prior to moving I had been a member of White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church. I am semi-retired but continue to consult and do human resources contracting intermittently, leaving enough time for warm winter getaways. We have four grown children and four grandchildren, all of whom live in the Twin Cities. We also are involved in volunteer activities, most recently with Loaves and Fishes. I am looking forward to meeting members of the congregation when the church building re-opens.



Rick Macpherson
I am an about-to-be retired lawyer who has represented people in civil rights and

disability discrimination cases. I am married to Susie Macpherson and have two adult children, Jamie and Ian. We have been attending Unity Church for more than 15 years. Susie and I decided we should become actual members to confirm what we felt and believed about our relationship to this church.

Susan Macpherson

After leaving the Lutheran church in high school, a brief time at First Universalist in Minneapolis, and marriage at First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis, I finally found my way to Unity Church through a Conscientious Objectors workshop during the war in the Middle East. Ruth MacKenzie singing at services sealed the deal. My son made life-long friends in the OWL program and my daughter regularly watches services from Chicago.

Profile of Evergreen Quilters



If you're looking for a group where you can come as you are, do what you can, and enjoy being together, the Evergreen Quilters might be just what you're seeking. Started by Martha Eaves and Denise DeJarlais as a way to raise money for local food shelves, Evergreen Quilters now create One More Redeemer quilts to donate to Project Home (a day shelter in downtown St. Paul); sell their quilts and other creative projects to raise money for the Jeremiah Program, Project Home, and Obama School; and display their wonderful fabric art in Parish Hall. They also gather (on Zoom during the pandemic) just to quilt together and support one another in life's journey.

If you'd like to join this group of warm and friendly folks, contact Peggy Wright at 651-698-2760.

The group is funny, caring, encouraging, and well organized. We are a no-guilt group that does not require a big time commitment. We enjoy sharing sewing ideas and tips. And we love to welcome new members!

—Dianne Connor

I joined in anticipation of becoming a grandma and wanted to re-learn how to quilt. They were so welcoming and willing to teach! No judgement.

—Terri McNeil

I'm full of gratitude for the opportunity to share my love of quilting with so many good friends in Evergreen Quilters, with the larger community through the groups Evergreen Quilters partners with, and with the church itself that's been so open to our many ways of offering our creations to the church community and the larger community.

—Kathie Simon Frank

My best experience with the group was when I suggested that we do a group Dignity quilt for Cherrywood Pointe, which is where Marv and I live. Evergreen had been meeting there so that I could attend even though I am caregiving full-time. I am so grateful to the group for making it possible to participate. The quilt is beautiful, and is deeply appreciated by our staff.

—Jeannie Spears

SPIRITUAL DEEPENING

Crossing and Blessing Our Thresholds

2021 Series Open for Registration

We are all living in threshold times, on the cusp of significant changes nationally, globally, and environmentally. If this wasn't abundantly clear before, the pandemic and widespread uprisings over centuries-old racial injustices have underscored the truth of this in 2020.

For some of us, however, these large-scale changes are compounded by personal thresholds (some caused by the pandemic and uprisings, others not). These include changes in our relationships, work, home, roles, identity, or abilities creating a significant turning point in our lives and bringing heightened awareness as well as both risk and possibility. Whether we've chosen these changes or not, they are places of great vitality and exchange, where new greets old and the familiar gives way to the unknown.

If this describes your own life now, you are invited to join the 2021 Thresholds series, a facilitated small group inviting participants to explore the changes occurring in their personal lives with the support and company of others doing the same on their own thresholds. (NOTE: group size is limited and pre-registration is required.)

"The support of the participants was amazing," said Jill van Koolwijk, a previous participant. "I connected with many congregants and made new friends. Most of all, the workshop confirmed that we are not alone in our struggles."

In a supportive small group facilitated by Rev. Karen Hering, we'll each reflect on a threshold we're currently crossing while accompanying others in crossing theirs. Using conversation, guided writing, and a variety of creative activities both playful and serious, we'll consider the meaning, risks, and possibilities present on the cusp of change.

"The series helped me let go of fear and realize that moving forward meant leaving some things behind," said Pam Sheen of her Thresholds experience. "The group process is perfect for threshold crossing, a 'safety net' of like-spirited individuals."

The group meets online on four Saturdays, January 23 – February 27, and participants are asked to commit to attending all four sessions. The series and schedule have been adapted to fit an online format and includes a two-part first session on Saturday, January 23, from 10:00 a.m. – noon and 1:00-3:00 p.m., and three additional Saturday mornings, February 6, 20, and 27, from 10:00 a.m. – noon. At the end of the series, on Sunday, February 28, the group will be blessed by the congregation in online worship, honoring the role of community in giving us all safe passage across the many thresholds of our lives.

The series is free to members; a fee of \$100 will be charged nonmembers at the time of registration. Register early at www.unityunitarian.org/thresholds.html, to reserve your place. For questions, e-mail Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org.

Wellspring: A Year of Spiritual Deepening

Do you yearn for deeper connection to your faith and to the people here? Do you wish you had a better grasp of our traditions, history and theology? Do you dream of a day when you have the time to create a daily spiritual practice? Then you might want to know more about Wellspring, a year-long curriculum designed with spiritual deepening as the goal.

Created by the Rev. Jen Crow, a former Hallman Ministerial Intern, Wellspring responds to the need for spiritual grounding in our own tradition and offers a five-spoke model of spiritual deepening. The five spokes include: daily spiritual practice, regular meetings of the Wellspring group, engagement with Unitarian Universalist history and theology, meeting monthly with a one-on-one spiritual director, and discerning our unique call in life.

Jen writes, "Engaged together, these five spokes create a powerful synergy that has fostered significant transformation in the lives of many of the participants. Most experience a deeper understanding and connection with Unitarian Universalism and their own spiritual lives."

Unity's Wellspring group will be led this year by Laura Park and Susan Huehn on Zoom. The group will begin with a retreat on Saturday, January 9, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and will meet regularly for 90 minutes on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month through November 2021. Each session will have reading assignments that support the exploration and engagement of the topics and themes. Class enrollment is limited to 15. If you are interested in this offering, please contact Martha Tilton by e-mail at martha@unityunitarian.org or by phone at 651-228-1456 x105.

Winter Qigong and Tai Ji

Tuesday, December 15 • 11:00 a.m.

Register: <https://bit.ly/wintertaiji>

The cycle of the year teaches us about change and the acceptance of all things. Winter is the time for stillness, rest, and restoration. In traditional Chinese medicine the water element is related to the season of winter. In this online session, Tai Ji teacher Lisa Schlingerman will guide participants through simple movements to keep the body warm and breathing meditations that calm the spirit and conserve energy. No experience in Tai Ji or Qigong required. Meditations can be done standing or sitting.

ADULT LEARNING

Wellspring Wednesday

Making room for other seasonal activities, as has been our practice in December, this month's Wellspring Wednesday programming will be offered on just the first two Wednesdays of the month. Our regular weekly programming will resume on January 6. We hope you will take advantage of this break in live programming to watch pre-recorded daily minister's messages or Wellspring Wednesday chapel services (<http://bit.ly/wwchapel>), to share time with family and friends, or to reach out to a fellow church member for conversation by phone or internet.

What is Wellspring Wednesday in a time of COVID?

Unity Church's Wellspring Wednesday has long been a multi-generational opportunity to gather midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. While the church building remains closed due to the pandemic, we continue to gather online for programming. Multi-generational chapel services are prerecorded and posted on the church's YouTube channel each Wednesday for viewing anytime that afternoon or later; and Unity's Religious Education program offers Our Whole Lives (OWL) classes for youths and periodic Tweens gatherings on Wednesday evenings.

For adults, one or two live online programs are offered each Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. as opportunities for enrichment, spiritual practice and fellowship. I hope you'll join us. If you haven't yet participated in an online program using Zoom, church staff can help you get started. Descriptions and registration links for this month's programs are listed below. (Unless otherwise noted, you can use the registration link right up until the program starts to participate.) Also watch your daily emails from the church for additional program options that may be announced as the month unfolds. As we say in church each Sunday, "Stay tuned!"

December 2 • 7:00-8:30 PM

Open Page Writing Session: A Posture of Waiting

Register: <https://bit.ly/openpagewait>



December in many world religions is the season of waiting — calling up a quiet posture of expectation that opens our awareness not just to what we know is coming but, especially, to the unexpected. In this session, led by Rev. Karen Hering, we'll reflect on cultivating a spirit of active waiting even as we march and work for change. RSVP through the registration link to receive a link to join the program.

December 9 • 7:00-8:00 PM

Honoring the Earth through Poetry

Register: <https://bit.ly/sltpoetrynight>

Long winter nights are perfect for reflection. Make a cup of tea and enjoy an evening of nature poetry, from the beauty that engenders awe to the heartbreak of its loss. We are privileged to invite renowned River Falls poet Thomas R. Smith to read from his work, along with Nicole Linskey and others from our congregation. Smith's poetry has been included in *Best American Poetry 1999*, "The Writer's Almanac," and is the author of nine poem collections including his upcoming book *Poetry on the side of Nature: Writing the Nature Poem as an Act of Survival*.

December 16

No Wellspring Wednesday programming. Please see page 3 for information about the Blue Holidays service offered on this evening.

December 23 and 30

No Wellspring Wednesday programming.

Connecting with Ourselves and Others: Relationships and Sexuality

There is still time to sign up for this monthly series. It offers a candid look at gender identity, sexuality and relationships, connecting our personal experience to the experiences of others and the forces of society at large. Each time we meet we will discuss short articles or videos on the monthly topics and hold small group conversations reflecting on personal experiences.

The class, led by Unity Church member Mike Huber, will critique the heteronormative expectations of dominant culture. All adults are welcome. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are encouraged to register. Please feel free to invite friends who might want to join you in attending.

This is an eight-part series held on Zoom, Thursday evenings, 7:00-8:30 p.m., October 29 – May 27. Registration is free and a single registration will apply to all monthly programs you are able to attend. Register online at <http://bit.ly/connectingselfandother>. For more information, email mikehuberece@gmail.com.

Sessions Overview

December 17: Relationships in the Age of COVID

January 28: Power Dynamics and Relationships

February 25: Expanding Our Desires

March 25: The Charmed Circle

April 29: Compassion in Our Everyday Interactions

May 27: Moving Past Us and Them

LIBRARIES AND BOOKSTALL / ARCHIVES TEAM

Unity Bookstall Online & Contactless Book Sale

Order Your Cairns and Books Today!

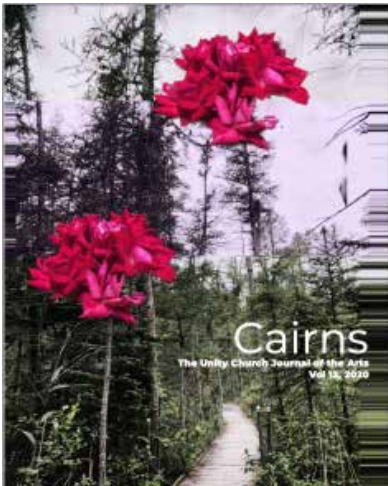
Shelley Butler, Barb Foss, and Jan Gestner
Unity Library and Bookstall Team Leaders

Do you miss visiting the Bookstall and purchasing books, the proceeds of which fund Unity Church libraries? We miss selling books to you and since we can't be there to do that in person, we are holding the first-ever Unity Bookstall online and contactless book sale.

ORDER BY DECEMBER 10!

Shop the book sale here: <https://unitybookstall.square.site>

Look! It's Cairns, Vol. 12, 2020!



We have a new issue for you, with a stunning cover by Amanda Rueter, but we'll have to get copies to you in a different way this year.

To get your copies of Cairns, order through the book sale catalog here: <https://unitybookstall.square.site>.

As you might expect, Unity Church ministers, writers, and artists have been deep in expression this year, many struggling with the double pandemics of Covid and racism. The Sunday after the killing of George Floyd, Rev. KP Hong talked to us about "beauty that awakens courage and creates brave space, where we can pick up the pieces and place

them side by side into a beautiful new mosaic." I think of Cairns Vol. 12 in this way, too. The contributors have filled brave space; and side by side have created something beautiful.

Archives Team Update

Louise Merriam, Archives Team



The Archives Team is one of the smaller teams at Unity Church, working since 2013 to sort and categorize materials that reflect the church's recent history. We ship processed items to the History Center at the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). We are also developing standards and proposals to manage Unity's archival materials in the future.

We have sent more than 100 boxes to the History Center, but this past year two factors limited our activity. One was a construction project at MHS that prevented us from shipping any completed boxes to them. The other was the Covid pandemic, which stopped the team from gathering to work on materials now kept in the church's facilities storage room. Despite these setbacks, the church recently agreed to subsidize the cataloging of the materials at MHS, an action that will greatly speed up access to the Unity Church collection. We are thrilled.

We hope that more people will join us when we can meet again. Team members don't need archival or library experience, or in-depth knowledge of Unity's history. Rather, they need only the willingness to open a box and record what they find. It's always an adventure!

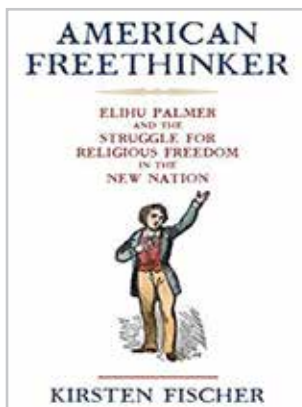
The Archives Team includes Pauline Eichten, Susan Foote, Patt Kelly, Carol Miller, Louise Merriam

Wellspring Wednesday January 6, 2020 • 7:00 p.m.

Kirsten Fischer Discusses Her New Book

*American Freethinker:
Elihu Palmer and the Struggle for Religious
Freedom in the New Nation*

Elihu was an infamous speaker in his day, sharing the radical idea that virtue and morality could be found outside of religion; for example, in the interconnected web of the natural world. He tested the new nation's foundation of freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Come meet this fascinating character who comes alive with Kirsten's pen.



STAYING CONNECTED

Online Group Meetings

The following groups have committed to meeting online while our building remains closed.

Afterthoughts offers time to discuss the service. Contact Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

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

Children's Choir: For youth in grades 1-5. Contact choir director Kathleen Radspinner, kathleenr395@gmail.com

Evergreen Quilters: The group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month. 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

Kung Fu: This 60 minute practice strengthens the body, calms the mind, and lifts the spirit. Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. Contact Barney Kujawski, barney.kujawski@gmail.com

Living With Grief Group: A group for people living with grief and loss. Meets on the third Tuesday of the month. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Men's Breakfast Group meets on Saturday mornings at 8:30 a.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Men's Conversation Group meets Monday, December 14 and 28, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, tmcdanel@gmail.com

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, December 7 and 21, 1:00-3:00 p.m., and informally for coffee on Wednesdays, 10:00-11:00 a.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

Music Ministry: Children's Choir, Unity Choir, Unity Singers, Women's Ensemble, and Thresholds Choir are all meeting and singing virtually. Contact Ahmed Anzaldúa, ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

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. Contact Dayna Kennedy, daynamelissa@icloud.com

Single Parenthood Support Group: A single parents group building community together. Meets every other Wednesday, December 9 and 23, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, laura@unityunitarian.org

Sustainable Living Team: Meets every other Sunday, December 13 and 27, from 8:30-9:45 a.m. Contact the team, unitysustainabilityteam@gmail.com

Textile Arts Group meets every other Wednesday, December 2 and 16, from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole, johanna2le@gmail.com

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net. On December 8 the group will discuss *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent* by Isabel Wilkerson.

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

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35): Watch for details about meetings. To join the YA email list, please email kp@unityunitarian.org.

Congregational Database Sign in today!

Members are invited to log in to ShelbyNext, the online congregational database that includes the ability to update and review your own membership and giving account, access the membership directory, and view the calendar.

To access from your PC:

- Open a browser (Chrome works best) and navigate to this URL: <https://unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com/>
- Choose "Forgot Password?"
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in, **upload a photo to your account**, and explore!

To download the App:

- Go to your App store: Google Play for Droid and App Store for iPhone/iPad (iPad users make sure to choose iPhone app)
- Download ShelbyNext Membership
- Enter the domain: unityunitarian (full domain: unityunitarian.shelbynextchms.com)
- Choose "Forgot Password?" if it is your first time accessing ShelbyNext Membership (or just log in if you have already accessed it on your PC)
- Enter the email address you use to communicate with Unity Church
- You should receive an email with your username and password
- Log in and explore!

Questions? Contact Martha Tilton at martha@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x105.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Lessons in Waiting

Sustainable Living Team Update

Anna Newton, Sustainable Living Team

When Unity's Sustainable Living Team first explored the UUA Green Sanctuary program, we did not know where the journey would lead. It was like gardening: it takes faith to press a small seed in soil and trust it will grow!

A friend once shared sprouted spring garlic with me. I planted them, but the wilting shoots struggled. When the plants produced amazing curly-cue scapes (flowerstalks), I didn't cut them off so final bulbs were small, and cloves separated making harvest almost impossible.



I have since learned timing is everything: I save the largest cloves to plant in the *fall*, allowing the establishment of a strong root system to support spring growth. I harvest promptly when the leaves turn brown. I have learned garlic is prolific, and descendants of those first plants now grow in the Children's Garden at church. I have also learned that garlic is tasty at every stage, including spring sprouts and mid-summer scapes!

As we seek to live more sustainably, many actions compete for our attention. After November's Act for the Earth event, the mood was energized and hopeful. We heard which environmental concerns the congregation was most concerned about. We searched for the best ideas "to plant," and now we wait for strong roots to grow. Three action teams (climate change, extinction, and justice) have formed and will meet monthly, starting in December, to plan actions for 2021. Our hope is for everyone in the congregation to eventually act, in ways large or small as they are able. We may sacrifice a few "scapes" along the way, but a year from now we shall celebrate a joyful harvest of effective actions!

It is not too late to join an action team! Email unitysustainabilityteam@gmail.com

Sustainable Living Team Film Discussion

My Octopus Teacher • Friday, December 4 • 8:00 p.m.

Register: <https://bit.ly/sltmyoctopusteacher>

A filmmaker forges an unusual friendship with an octopus living in a South African kelp forest, learning as the animal shares the mysteries of her world. This beautiful film will make us all reflect on our relationship with the natural world. The SLT encourages you to view the film from home via Netflix, and join the discussion!

Honoring the Earth through Poetry

Wellspring Wednesday, December 9 • 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Register: <https://bit.ly/sltpoetrynight>

See page 9 for details.

The Work Goes On (and pies!)

Obama School Ministry Team Update

Nancy Heege, Obama School Ministry Team

Even though the scholars and staff at Barack and Michelle Obama School are involved only in distance learning this fall, support for them from Unity's volunteers continues. The principals asked us recently if we might be able to arrange for an incentive for Obama families to come to school on November 23 to pick up additional school supplies, saying "We'd like to give a pie to the first 100 families to arrive at the school. Can you help us?" After quick conversations with the church staff, we sent out a request to our volunteers for donations to purchase the pies. Within a few hours, we had raised more than \$800. Martha Tilton of the church staff (and also one of our Obama volunteers) arranged for the purchase and delivery of the pies — sweet potato, apple, and pecan! Thanks to all who donated to this "sweet" project!



In addition, an anonymous donor from Unity Church generously agreed to give \$1500 to cover the remaining costs of a program between Walker West Music Academy and Obama School. Through this partnership, scholars meet with an artist from Walker West to create 20-minute programs of hip hop and jazz, which they will be rolling out in January. The principals and staff at Obama School are very grateful for our continuing involvement, even during this pandemic.

Shop at Kowalski's! Support Obama School! It's easy. When you shop at Kowalski's Market on Grand Avenue, place your receipt in the Obama Elementary School box at the front of the store. Each quarter, Kowalski's divides a \$3000 donation among all the organizations named on the boxes. The amount Obama Elementary School will receive depends on the total number of receipts collected in the Obama School box.

Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf is currently in need of non-perishable food donations as well as shampoo, toilet paper, and small bottles of dish soap. Donations should be delivered to the front desk at the food shelf: 270 North Kent Street, St. Paul, 55102. Or join their Milk and Egg Club and give online:

www.hallieqbrown.org/site/index.php/milk-egg-club/



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>. Offering checks, payable to Unity Church, should be sent "Attn. Song Thao."

December 6: [Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism \(BLUU\)](#)

BLUU provides information, resources, and support for Black Unitarian Universalists and works to expand the power and capacity of Black UUs, offering online worship twice monthly for Black UUs and guests. Formed in 2015, the BLUU Organizing Collective is committed to justice-making and liberation through Unitarian Universalism, harnessing love's power to combat oppression and foster healing as a spiritual and political imperative. BLUU's work draws on the power of love to be life changing, inclusive, relational, uncomfortable, unconditional, and without end. Several exciting projects BLUU is currently undertaking and offering are described in this five minute video from BLUU Executive Director Lena Katherine Gardner: <https://youtu.be/xlRgakqkqM4>.

December 13: [Penumbra Theatre](#)

Penumbra Theater, founded in 1976, creates professional productions that are artistically excellent, thought provoking and relevant, and illuminate the human condition through the prism of the African American experience. Penumbra aims to increase public awareness of the significant contributions of African Americans in creating a diversified American theatrical tradition by maintaining and stabilizing a black performing arts community in St. Paul. Its programs offer unique opportunities for spiritual growth, learning, and engagement in racial and restorative healing.

December 20: [Casa Guadaluana](#)

Casa Guadaluana, founded in 1999 in the spirit of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, serves the immigrant Latinx community. Located in West St. Paul, Guadaluana is a home providing safe, dignified, stable housing to women and children who have been displaced from their countries of origin and are seeking a safe place to live while they navigate the complex immigration system. Unity Church members volunteer at Casa Guadaluana and are connected through Unity's membership in the St. Paul Sanctuary Coalition.

December 27: [Minneapolis Crisis Nursery](#)

Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, founded in 1983, 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. The nursery answers nearly 4,000 crisis calls annually and offer shelter for up to 20 children per day, providing over 5,000 nights of care during the course of the year to children aged newborn through six.

Continuing the Conversation about Indigenous Justice and Relations

This fall, in worship, programming, and Sacred Sites Tours, Unity Church has sought to better understand the history experienced by indigenous people in Minnesota and how it lives on in the present day. We have been called into a "season of lament" over the deep suffering in those stories. Two brief video messages from the Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs, shared in our October 18 worship service, "[Moving at the Speed of Trust](#)," are now available online:

- Bdots Stories of First Creation: <https://youtu.be/gAgftzgN0G8>
- Wrestling with Stories of Trauma in the Land Beneath Our Feet: <https://youtu.be/YVoWT8t9os4>

You can also read an account of the Sacred Sites Tours, attended by Unity Church members this fall, in the Beloved Community Team Blog: <https://bit.ly/sacredsitesblog>.

If you are interested in joining the continuing conversation about how we stay present to this lament while deepening our congregational commitment to Indigenous justice and reparations, contact Karen Hering at karen@unityunitarian.org.

Sustainable Living Film Discussion



My Octopus Teacher

Friday, December 4 • Discussion at 8:00 p.m.

Register: <https://bit.ly/sltmyoctopusteacher>

A filmmaker forges an unusual friendship with an octopus living in a South African kelp forest, learning as the animal shares the mysteries of her world. This beautiful film will make us all reflect on our relationship with the natural world. The Sustainable Living Team encourages you to view the film via Netflix and then join the discussion!

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Wait For It

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

"I feel like I did *nothing* once again today, and I don't know what to do with myself!" This was my daughter Harper in early November, the day before the election. I was startled because she could have been channeling my own

thoughts at that moment, almost word for word!

"Oh, but really you've done a lot today haven't you?" This was me just repeating what I had just said to myself moments before this interchange.

"I suppose yes, I have. But I'm not motivated to do anything and nothing I did was at all satisfying." She said this with the most annoyed feeling behind it, her brows literally furrowed into a deep V.

I shifted into philosophical, reassuring dad mode, though I know I felt exactly the same. "We are without our routines, which like them or not provide like 75% of our daily motivation to do anything. So we have more time to wonder about what we're doing. And because it's all up in the air it feels like we just have to keep wondering. And waiting."

Beyond my wisely naming the problem, I had nothing, other than empathy. I told KP about this, and he asked me if I told her she should pray. At first I didn't understand how he made a jump to that from my identification of the existential angst my daughter was describing for both her and me. I should say this conversation happened while KP, Ray, and I were discussing how to "do ministry" in this pandemic and in this time. Even so it struck me as a bit of a "churchy" thing to say, or that I might suggest to my daughter. But I've been thinking about it more and more, about how it might just be that praying is the right coping strategy for all this waiting we're forced to do these days.

As I write this, Coming of Age participants are pondering the question, "What is the nature of the higher power?" For my part of this question I asked the class and mentors to think about how much of what makes us human also makes us prone to pray, to communicate with a higher power. We want answers, we want meaning. We want direction —so if there is someone to ask, we're going to ask. Really, we want to be in a conversation about all of that, with God, maybe, with others, absolutely.

It's awful that so many things are getting in the way of our openly, actively being in conversation about anything and everything right now, and so we're left waiting. With furrowed brows. I'm thinking more and more that what I need to do about it is keep praying, and yes even suggest it to my kids, and your kids, and even all of you. Prayer is, as I see it, a conversation, one we do together as a church. And I can't wait any more.

Pastoral Care

If you have a joy or sorrow, life-cycle event, or concern you would like to share with the ministers and Pastoral Care Team, or have shared in the embracing meditation during Sunday service, please complete the online form at www.unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html or send an email to janne@unityunitarian.org and a minister will contact you.

Sing with a Unity Choir

Unity's choirs (adult *and* children) are meeting online every week! In addition to learning new music, we are also meeting to sing familiar songs and maintain our connection to each other and to the church. All newcomers are welcome and encouraged to take part! If you are interested, contact Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

A Call for Music

Given the depth of musical talent in this congregation, Ahmed is extending an invitation to individuals and families to share their music making. Please send a video of your singing, playing a musical instrument, or doing anything else that's musical! The only request is that this is a video of you or your family making music — please do not send prerecorded music made by someone else. So, turn on your phone camera, record yourself singing a song or playing something, and send it to Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

Flowers for Worship

If you would like to provide flowers for Sunday worship, contact Martha Tilton at 651-228-1456 x105 or martha@unityunitarian.org.

Church Calendar

All church programming can be found on our calendar at www.unityunitarian.org/calendar1.html.

Social Media

Follow Unity Church!

Facebook: www.facebook.com/unityunitarian

YouTube: youtube.com/c/unitychurchunitarian

Instagram: www.instagram.com/unityunitarian

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UnityUnitarian>

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa
Director of Music Ministries

My first December, last year, at Unity Church was so special and overwhelming. We kicked it off with a holiday concert by the choirs followed by an enormous feast of baked goods. The weeks that followed included the hundredth anniversary of the Christmas pageant, carol shouting, Advent traditions, beautiful solstice and Blue Holidays services, and Christmas Eve marathon that started early in the morning and ended around midnight. December at Unity is a unique, special time and it was one of the highlights of my first year.

My second December will be quite different from the first. Initially, I was sad because I focused on the things we cannot do safely. However, we're gradually figuring out what we can keep and preserve and ways in which we can bring joy and reverence to this season. I am grateful to our staff and community for working hard to make all of this happen. This month, I encourage you to take part in the following events at Unity Church:

On Friday, December 11, at 8:00 p.m., Border Crossing and Ina Yukka will present a livestream performance of "[El Mesías](#)" featuring a virtual collaboration with the Minnesota Orchestra directly from Unity's Sanctuary. This performance would not be possible without the partnership of our church and the work of our staff. The musicians involved and their families will quarantine for two weeks and will be tested to ensure that this program can happen safely. Our hope is that this concert brings some joy to the holiday season. I am also excited to be able to involve Unity Church in what has become a yearly holiday tradition and highlight in the local Latinx cultural calendar. "El Mesías" combines a bilingual (Spanish-English) version of the Christmas story portion of Handel's *Messiah* with *Navidad Nuestra*, a Christmas cantata by Argentine composer Ariel Ramírez. We will also perform portions of this program as the music of the worship service on Sunday, December 13.

I encourage you to submit a video for this year's carol shout! To take part, record a short video, no longer than 20 seconds, requesting your favorite carol. Laura Potratz (Unity's organist) and myself will watch all the videos and choose our favorites based on enthusiasm and creativity. These videos will be played before the worship service on Sunday, December 20, followed by Laura and our cantors playing the requested carols for all to sing along at home. Deadline to submit a carol shout video is December 13. Submission should be sent to ahmed@unityunitarian.org as an attachment to an email, as a link to YouTube, via Google Drive, or uploaded to his Dropbox at <https://bit.ly/carolshoutupload>.

Finally, I want to thank all the singers at Unity that have continued to engage with the music ministry online. It hasn't been easy to make music while we are apart and I am grateful for our time together every week. They've worked hard to create several videos that will be in our worship services on Christmas Eve, and we truly hope that everyone at Unity is moved by them. If you have a friend in the choirs and have enjoyed their musical offerings, I encourage you to reach out to them and let them know! It is also never too late to join the choirs at Unity Church, especially right now that we are working from home.

El Mesías

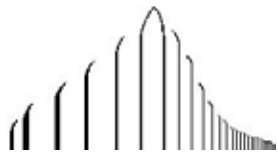
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Submit a video for the carol shout!



Record a short video, no longer than 20 seconds, requesting your favorite carol. Laura Potratz (Unity's organist) and Ahmed will watch all the videos and choose their favorites based on enthusiasm and creativity. The selected videos will be played before the worship service on Sunday, December 20, followed by Laura and Unity's music staff playing the requested carols for everyone to sing along at home.

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UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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

JACKIE SMITH, CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REV. JANNE ELLER-ISAACS, CO-MINISTER
REV. ROB ELLER-ISAACS, CO-MINISTER
REV. KP HONG, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
BARBARA HUBBARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**



SUBMIT A VIDEO FOR THE CAROL SHOUT!
Details on page 15!

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