

## Incarnation

*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.*

*Incarnation* names the mystery of spirit or soul residing in our embodied or material world. From the Latin *incarnatio*, meaning “in the flesh,” it refers to the conception and birth of divinity in human form. First used theologically by 12th-century Christian leaders, *incarnation* described the belief in Jesus’ double status as both fully human and fully god. “The Word became flesh,” the gospel of John declares, describing Jesus. Which, in one translation of the Greek word *logos* (the word), might be understood to mean Jesus was God’s full message or expression in the world: sacred spirit made visible by his humanity.

Understood more broadly, incarnation challenges the faulty dualism of body and soul, a dualism as present in parts of Unitarian Universalism as elsewhere. An incarnate theology refuses the notion that our bodies tragically imprison our souls or that either body or soul is more virtuous or sacred than the other. It suggests instead a relational wholeness more akin to ancient Taoist teachings that body and soul complete one another. “Every being in the universe,” said Lao Tsu, “. . . springs into existence perfect, unconscious and free, takes on a physical body, and lets circumstances complete it.”

In this panoptic view, the advent season anticipating the story of Jesus’ birth, is one in which we watch for the holy presence of life itself as it emerges not imprisoned but fully expressed in every one of us and in the world around us. Significantly,

it does not always appear where we might have expected it — under the king’s crown or the enforcement of his soldiers, in the comfort of the inn, or in the privilege of the wealthy or the wise. No. The story of Jesus’ birth reminds us that the holy is incarnate everywhere and in everyone, especially wherever our eyes may have moved on too quickly – in the unwed mother and the unplanned child, in the homeless traveler, in the bed of straw, the animals gathered round it, and the roaming shepherds giving witness to its miracle.

Other personal and contemporary stories have deepened my understanding in particular of advent’s *incarnation*. For instance, friends waiting as adoptive parents to be united with a new child born far away have taught me that many important preparations may not be for the birth of new life. Sometimes, more powerfully and proleptically, we wait and prepare for the birth of new relationship with life already in this world, experiencing incarnation that arises not just within us but between us.

The pandemic, too, has much to teach us about incarnation and embodied wholeness — about the sacred but messy and vulnerable nature of being bodies in a world where the blood and breath we need to live can also carry illness, even death. How to hold these seeming contradictions together? How to recognize the sacred gift delivered in the losses of our time? How to open ourselves to the miracle of relationship being born today, beneath our masks, across safe distancing, despite deep

differences in faith, in immunity, in privilege, in place?

It is no accident that we focus on incarnation now — as the nights grow long in Minnesota’s northern clime and the pandemic’s persistent suffering wears our patience thin. Now, as dry husks rattle in the fields and in December winds, the mystery of spirit animating the dormant natural world keeps despair from taking hold. Beneath the hardened ground, within the bare-branched trees, life remains and rests and waits. Neither spirit nor embodiment can reign alone. The world is made of both. And we, as people of faith and wholeness, are called to hold them together in our hearts, in our relationships and communities, awaiting another turn of earth and season and a new tilt of sunlight that, in time, will beckon life forth again.

*By Karen Hering on behalf of this month's theme team: Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson, Tom Duke, Ray Hommeyer, KP Hong, Kathy Hurt, and Laura Park (including portions from an earlier commUNITY reflection by Karen Hering).*

### Incarnation Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme, a variety of resources are listed in this month’s Chalice Circle packet available at [www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html](http://www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html) and by request from [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org).



## Interim Reflections

“Do you prefer your God with or without form?”

I heard that question from a congregant in one of my congregations as she was recounting her time studying with a Buddhist teacher in India. The question stuck

with me, for it seemed to fly in the face of many assumptions about God in Western spiritual traditions particularly, namely that God, being spirit, does not come in a specific form. Even further, Western traditions have tended to see depictions of God in some sort of form as idolatrous and to be avoided.

Yet this month we take up the theme of incarnation, an idea that rebuts all those arguments about gods not taking on forms and that to envision God in a form is wrong-headed. Incarnation insists that our tendency to separate out whatever we call sacred as some sort of disembodied entity, to push the sacred outside all of the created world, all the concrete reality around us, is a misunderstanding. Instead, sacred and ordinary, spirit and flesh, are inextricably woven together.

And in case that all sounds like a hopelessly abstruse theological concern, our days bring us constant evidence of the tragedy that comes whenever we live as though incarnation were not true and as though the sacred was somewhere apart from us. Because if I stop to remember that God is here, now, in the room with me, in the world outside my windows, in the annoying neighbor whose music is playing too loud, in each breath I take, that God is never not present — then I tend to live very differently than I do when I live in a reality devoid of the sacred.

In faith, hope, and love,  
Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt

## The Wheel of Life

### *In Memoriam*

**Margaret E. Durham**

May 16, 1928 – November 17, 2021

**Charles (Charlie) Paule**

November 24, 1959 – November 5, 2021

**Greta Michaels**

March 11, 1929 – October 20, 2021

## Shhh... Ministerial Search Team at Work

**Lia Rivamonte, on behalf of the Ministerial Search Team:**

Avi Viswanathan, Betsy Hearn, Mary Baremore, Pauline Eichten, Morgan France-Ramirez, Jake Rueter, Dan Huelster, and Marg Walker

Admittedly, Ministerial Search Team members have been pretty loud these last couple of months. In print, at worship, online, and in various locations throughout Unity's sacred spaces, we've made a lot of noise inviting — even exhorting — congregants to participate in our survey and listening sessions. However, now the team must enter into a period of quiet retreat.

We will continue to process the findings summarized for the congregation at the annual meeting on November 20. By the time of this update, we will have conducted listening sessions with the staff and Executive Team as well as having asked ourselves, and responded to, the same questions we posed to congregants. Later this month, we welcome Alfonso Wenker of Team Dynamics, who will coach us on equitable, fair, and open-minded hiring practices. We will use this learning to inform our interactions with applicants.

In January, our time will be spent culling through applications from those interested in becoming Unity's senior minister. Soon afterwards, we will begin conducting online interviews, after which time, we hope to move three candidates forward and invite them to meet with us in person. (Yes, it'll be deep winter in Minnesota—surely the first test!) During this outwardly quiet period of the search process, the team asks for the congregation's understanding concerning the confidentiality we must ensure any and all applicants for the position. Beyond the strictures placed on us by law, there are ethical considerations regarding privacy and fairness. In other words, we are doing the work we have been entrusted to do by our congregation, and we hold this work as sacred.

This does not mean dodging us in the hallway or in the street. It does mean please refrain from asking about who has applied, what we think about the prospects, and when the candidates are coming to visit Unity. We may smile, but our lips are sealed.

*Members of Unity's Ministerial Search Team have posted bios and introduction videos on the transitions webpage. Click on over and get to know the members who are doing this important work on behalf of the congregation: [unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html](http://unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html)!*

# SUNDAY SERVICES / OFFERING RECIPIENTS

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Join us in-person and online for Sunday services! If you join us in-person, please sign in and out, and wear a mask when in the building. On December 26 there will be just one service at 10:00 a.m., both in-person and on livestream.

## December 5: *When God Shows Up*

In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: [youtu.be/Jbch9rchYrc](https://youtu.be/Jbch9rchYrc)

One meaning of this month's theme of incarnation might be captured in the Biblical description of the name of the holy child as being Emmanuel, meaning "God with us." If we consider incarnation less a view about one particular individual but about all life, all of us, all the reality we see around us, perhaps the idea of incarnation reminds us that our habitual binary vision is not quite accurate. Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt and worship associate Katrina Nichols lead this exploration of incarnation. Musicians: Unity Choir

## December 12: *There's a Feeling in the Air*

In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: [youtu.be/XI40QUwNS-M](https://youtu.be/XI40QUwNS-M)

We talk and sing about getting in the "spirit" of the holidays, a spirit that is wrapped in images of peace and hope. Yet those images seem in stark contrast alongside the realities of injustice and oppression. Does the vision of incarnation offer a way to join such differing experiences? Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt and worship associate Jen Welsh reflect on how incarnation challenges injustice in ways we may need most at this time of year. Musicians: Women's Ensemble

## December 19: Family Sunday: *Las Posadas*

In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: [youtu.be/VG8K16b\\_UVU](https://youtu.be/VG8K16b_UVU)

As we await the birth of wonder, the whole church family will gather for the story of *Las Posadas* (The Inns). The service will invite us to journey with Mary and Joseph as they search for a place for their baby to be born, even as we wonder how our church may be a place of welcome in the dark mid-winter days. Musicians: Unity Singers

On Family Sundays we welcome families and children to the Sanctuary. A Story for All Ages will be shared and activity packets for younger children are available for use during worship. The nursery is also open.

## December 26: *Good Bones*

One service, in-person and livestreamed, at 10:00 a.m.

Livestream: [youtu.be/zgpOdCrR44I](https://youtu.be/zgpOdCrR44I)

We've all heard that old, run-down houses have "good bones," meaning that although the house is terrible, it has a good structure and foundation, and therefore can be made into something beautiful. We live in a world of terrible destruction, heartbreak, violence, and injustice. What if we could embody that which is needed to make this world into something beautiful? Rev. Shay MacKay and worship associate Ray Wiedmeyer will lead this 10:00 a.m. service.

Thirty percent of our Sunday offering supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to a community non-profit recipient. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <https://bit.ly/sundayoffering>.

## December 5: Shobi's Table

Shobi's Table is a mobile cafe ministry aiming to foster vibrant community networks by making delicious, nutritious, from-scratch cookin' available to everyone, regardless of whether or not they can pay. It partners with Twin Cities Food Justice gathering produce from local co-ops and grocery stores and turning it into nutritious meals for community sharing. Shobi's Table serves the Frogtown, Midway, and the Capitol Hill/Rice Street neighborhoods, bringing people across economic and social barriers to the same table. Unity Church member Patricia Ohmans is an advocate for Shobi's Table. [shobistable.org](https://shobistable.org)

## December 12: Intro to Success

Intro to Success (ITS) provides program and community network opportunities for young BIPOC visual and performing artists. ITS offers extensive mentoring resources that encourage aspiring artists to explore their creativity and imagine its expression. Through events (ITS Fest) and residencies (ITS FACTORY) for selected artists, ITS fosters relationships within the North Minneapolis community through celebrating art, its creation and production. Unity's Lia Rivamonte works with ITS. [bit.ly/ITSoffering](https://bit.ly/ITSoffering)

## December 19: Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

The Hallie Q. Brown Center, a lighthouse of hope in the Selby-Dale/Rondo community since 1929, operates a food shelf and clothing closet serving families in the neighborhood. H.Q. Brown offers a client-choice model where community members can pick food items they will use instead of being handed a stock bag which may contain items that do not meet their dietary or cultural needs. This collection will support food needs and emergency services, bringing moments of light and hope into this holiday season. Unity's Evergreen Ministry partners with H.Q. Brown. [hallieqbrown.org](https://hallieqbrown.org)

## December 26: Microgrants

Microgrants gives grants up to \$1000 to people with scarce financial resources to invest in their lives. The grants are designed to help people increase their income, either through small business development or finding and retaining stable employment. Microgrants also provides mentorship and invests in three main areas: education, small business development, and transportation. Unity Church member Phil Morton is a supporter of Microgrants. [microgrants.net](https://microgrants.net)

Nominate an organization to receive our Sunday offering: <https://www.unityunitarian.org/sunday-offering.html>.

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES / PLEDGE DRIVE UPDATE



## Change or Continuity?

**Justin Cummins, Trustee**

The debate about change versus continuity is likely top of mind for many of us as we are facing important transitions. These transitions are as daunting as they are necessary, whether regarding the ministers and other leadership at Unity Church, in our social, educational, and work environments as the COVID-19 and white supremacist pandemics persist, and in the ecological, economic, and political realms while the climate crisis escalates. With so many challenging dynamics confronting us simultaneously, it may be tempting to seek refuge in a return to an imagined “normal” of yesteryear.

We must not resist change; change is inevitable and, indeed, ongoing — as our friends from Buddhist and other wise traditions have long recognized. It may be less difficult for us to embrace the changes necessary now, whether at the individual, institutional, or systemic levels, if we understand that we do not have to choose between change and continuity. We — as individuals, as a religious community, and as people who share this precious planet — can both pursue transformative change and cultivate progressive continuity at the same time.

One might ask how we can have both change and continuity. Our current situation at Unity provides a concrete example. In 2018, the congregation rearticulated and reinvigorated the Core Values that help to anchor everyone who works at Unity and/or calls Unity their spiritual home. Those Core Values are the following:

- Wonder;
- Open-hearted engagement; and
- Courageous action.

At the same time, the congregation developed and adopted powerful Ends Statements to guide our work and how we engage with each other and the larger world. Those Ends Statements are as follows:

- Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships;
- Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening;
- Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world;
- Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people;
- Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition;
- Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it;
- Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture; and
- Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.

The extent to which we pursue change while being anchored by our Core Values and guided by our Ends Statements is the extent to which we will have continuity even as we change. The Board of Trustees continues to work on behalf of the congregation in precisely this way, with the Core Values and Ends Statements at the center. Please join the board as together we, in the words of popular educators Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, make the road by walking it.

## Pledge Drive Update

Thank you to all who made pledges during our fall pledge drive. Because of you, we can trust the river that runs through this congregation as we look toward our future.

As of the writing of this article in mid-November, we have received 585 commitments for the 2022 operating budget totaling \$1,246,600. Our goal for 2022 is \$1,350,000, leaving \$103,400 left to raise by the end of 2022.

Of those who pledged for 2022, 561 households renewed their 2021 pledges with an average increase of 2.5%. We have received 24 new pledges for 2022 at this time. We are waiting to hear from just over 100 households who pledged in 2021 and if all made pledges for 2022 comparable to their 2021 pledge, we’d reach our goal.

Capital pledges for 2022 now total \$204,864 from 342 households, which will ensure we can pay debt service on our long-term note and make other capital repairs and acquisitions.

If you haven’t yet made a pledge for 2022, it not too late! It’s easy to pledge online ([unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html](https://unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html)), or contact Barbara or Song at the church office. We are happy to answer any questions that you have about pledging.



## De-centering Whiteness through Action and Art

Dayna Kennedy and Paul Rogne Discuss Landmarks on Their Soul Work Journey

Edited by Becky Gonzalez-Campoy, Beloved Community Communications Team

### Dayna Kennedy

Next to my bathroom mirror I have posted two notes:

- *De-center my whiteness.*  
Participation in several Unity's Team Dynamics workshops, Wellspring Wednesday events, Black Film Canon series, and Recovery from White Conditioning helps me to rethink how I view my place in the world.
- *Where is the action?*  
A challenge issued to me by my BIPOC friends.



Advocacy and political action have always played a prominent role in my life. I've been marching since I was very young and writing letters-to-the editor and working with legislators, etc. Yet, I began to see that I was, all at the same time, taking up a lot of space as a white person. Somewhere along the way, I had an epiphany: I will volunteer when I can be led by a person of color. This re-focused my work entirely. Whether it's affordable housing or marching in support of (or against) an issue, this one idea has allowed me to begin to de-center my white self, my perfectionism, and many other attributes of whiteness.

And I'm showing up differently. I make sure I'm not doing this work to "save" anybody. I clear out any part of me that is feeling like a "hero" for marching. Now, I listen for what is needed and do what I am able to do. Change begins within me. But so does action. When I am feeling overwhelmed or frozen by the authentic history I am

learning, I remember that my white history has given me a weak muscle that I need to exercise to build up stamina. And my white privilege has given me a short attention span — I can turn away when things get tough.... and *my* life will be affected very little. Moreover, no one holds me accountable. This work is hard to do in isolation. One solution that continues to prove invaluable to me is Recovery from White Conditioning. This group provides me with a community of meaningful support and accountability.

Whether it is a phone bank or calling legislators, I hear the freshness and urgency in the voices of my BIPOC partners. The effects for them are now ... and every day. I continue to ask myself, "Why, just because the pigment of our skin is different, do I not feel the same sense of urgency?" After all, as James Baldwin said, it is my soul which is at stake.

### Paul Rogne

We often rely on words for education, self-reflection, and spiritual growth. Art, too, can be a powerful messenger to change how we see ourselves, our community, and the world.

Unity's antiracism goals inspire my work as the chairperson of the Unity Art Team. We are the group that bring artists to exhibit in the Parish Hall. We also manage over 80 pieces of art in the permanent collection that are displayed throughout the building. A few years ago, we identified the pursuit of Unity's Ends Statements as something to embrace, especially, "Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships" and "Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture." Consequently, the Art Team has deliberately sought to bring greater diversity of art and artists into the Parish Hall and to expand the permanent collection with art representing a multicultural community.

In 2020-21, this led the Art Team to specifically recruit and select artists of color to exhibit in the Parish Hall. The team also has added six new pieces of art to the permanent collection: A weaving by the Karin Weavers, a fine art print by local Latino artist Ricardo Levins Morales, a powerful painting on the theme of immigration by Black artist Simone Spruce, an impressive diptych painting by Heather Friedli whose heritage is Anishinaabe and Mexican, and a painting by local Black artist Rose Smith inspired by her trip to Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. We hope the addition of more diversity in the art displayed at Unity will have a positive impact on the congregation and visitors to the church. This effort will continue over the coming years.

So come take time to enjoy and reflect on our featured exhibits and permanent collection. Each piece has much to teach us all.



"Are We a Nation" by Simone Spruce



"Spring Promenade" by Heather Friedli

# WELCOME NEWCOMERS



## Welcome Words

**Laura Park, Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality**

Have you ever noticed how something you envision in your head does not always turn out the way you expect in reality? Twenty-five years ago, when I realized “I need a church, and I need it *right now*,” I had an image in my head of what belonging to a church could mean but no real understanding of the changes an embodied relationship with a church might

bring. My first Sunday at Unity Church, participating in a ritual that the people around me clearly loved, singing, breathing, and reflecting with those around me, started me on a journey of transformation in the way I moved in the world. No longer able to ignore the universe’s invitation to make the holy whole within me, I’ve been working ever since to embody that yearning.

As we celebrate the Christmas season at Unity Church, renewing our understanding of our Christian taproot and celebrating the wonder that is at the center of every birth, perhaps you too are searching for an embodiment of the holy in your own life and a community to accompany you on that journey. I’m here to help answer your questions about congregational life and the pathways you might explore to know the church better and deepen your spiritual life. Contact me at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110. I look forward to getting to know you!

## Pathway to Membership Classes

Explore a deeper connection to Unity Church and the commitments and opportunities of membership. Contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x110 with questions or to participate.

### Finding Yourself at Unity

**Sundays • 10:15-11:15 a.m.**

**Gannett Room in-person and online at [bit.ly/fyuonline](https://bit.ly/fyuonline)**

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. Weekly church emails include the class topic or email [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org) to receive reminders. November offerings:

- December 5: Community Outreach and Social Justice
- December 12: Pastoral Care
- December 19: Religious Education for Children, Youth, and Adults
- December 26: No class

### Committing to Unity

**Tuesday, January 11, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.**

- *Develop personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.*
- *Develop the skills of intimacy that let you go deep quickly with strangers.*
- *Take the compassion that rises from doing the first two and use it to bless the world.*

This is how Unity Church talks about its expectations of membership. Does the invitation into this ongoing work resonate with you? Are you ready to make the membership commitment? This session, for people ready to become members, 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 and officially join the church. A private signing ceremony can also be arranged.

## 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, at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org).

## Membership Database

### Log in today!

Unity Church uses a congregational database called ShelbyNext. Logging in allows you to access your own membership and giving information, as well the church's online membership directory and calendar.

Easy, step by step directions are available here: [unityunitarian.org/membership-database.html](https://unityunitarian.org/membership-database.html). If you need additional support, please email [martha@unityunitarian.org](mailto:martha@unityunitarian.org).



## Unity's Pastoral Care: An Invitation to Care and Be Cared For Rev. Karen Hering, Associate Minister

Here, at Unity Church, we know we all need one another. To address that need and our stated congregational goal of creating an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people, we begin by building our congregational capacity to care for one another, within and beyond our membership.

For many decades, and under several names, Unity has offered pastoral care. You might know it as a comfort shawl knitted by a church member and delivered as the warm embrace of the congregation to wrap around your shoulders when you were ill or reeling from life's troubles. Or maybe you received a caring call or visit, a meal, a ride or a thoughtful card when you were hurting, recovering or grieving. Or a support group you or someone you know participated in that lightened the load of being a caregiver for a loved one. All these, and more, are what we've called "pastoral care," offered by Unity's ministers and lay members on the pastoral care associates team.

As part of our interim year tasks, we are restructuring, renewing, and renaming the Pastoral Care program and now invite interested church members to apply to become a Care Associate in the new year. Care Associates are trained and commissioned to provide many forms of congregational care in partnership with our associate minister. Drawing from Unity's long history of caring support, today we strive to overcome the isolation of the pandemic and to heal the brokenness of relationship that systemic racism depends on. We nurture the loving and healthy interdependence at the core of true justice and right relationship.

We presently offer many ways of being spiritually, emotionally, and practically present to one another, accompanying church members and friends through challenging times, on "short walks" or "long ones." Some of the current forms of care we provide include:

- Naming congregants' passages in worship's Embracing Meditations
- Texting, emailing, calling, and postal messages of support, encouragement and care, and conversation at the Sunday morning pastoral care table in Parish Hall after worship.
- Support groups co-facilitated by the associate minister and a lay leader, including a Grief Group, Caregivers Group, and Families with Loved Ones with Mental Illness.
- "Helping hands" support including meals, rides, and other practical support as possible, as well as memorial service hospitality.
- One-time or ongoing in-person visits to people isolated by illness, aging, or other circumstances.
- Comfort shawls, knitted by church members for those experiencing illness or loss, as a physical reminder of the congregation's embrace.

If you would like to request any of these forms of care or support, please contact Rev. Karen Hering at [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org) or 651-228-1456 x109 or online at [unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html](http://unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html).

Please visit our Pastoral Care page at [unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html](http://unityunitarian.org/pastoral-care.html). There, you'll find Information about different volunteer opportunities as well as the required commitment and application process for becoming a Care Associate. Applications will be accepted until mid-January (please apply earlier, if possible) and the new team of Care Associates will be convened and trained in February.



A reading in our hymnal  
by George Odell says,

*"We need one another  
when we mourn ... when  
we are in trouble and  
afraid... and need to be  
recalled to our best selves  
again. ... in the hour of  
our successes, when we  
look for someone to share  
our triumphs [and] in the  
hour of our defeat when  
with encouragement we  
might endure and stand  
again. We need one  
another when we come to  
die, and would have gentle  
hands prepare us for the  
journey. All our lives we  
are in need, and others are  
in need of us."*





# HOLIDAY SERVICES & EVENTS



## Plans for Christmas Eve

### A message from the Executive Team

As we move towards the holiday season, your Unity Church staff have been discussing what plans for Christmas Eve services make the most sense in this time when we can gather in church, but are still limited in just how we gather. Those limitations present difficult challenges in figuring out how to safely offer all the traditional services we have long enjoyed on Christmas Eve, especially where mounting the two pageants are concerned.

We have concluded, with some disappointment, that presenting the pageant is not possible. Safety concerns about numbers in the Sanctuary, about participation by families and children, about the new staging required due to the technology additions, all came together to bring us to that conclusion. We will again make the Centennial Christmas Pageant video available for all to enjoy.

On Christmas Eve we will offer the "Find a Stillness" service at 10:00 a.m. in Ames Chapel, and a "Family Lessons and Carols" service at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Thank you for your understanding of this decision, and we continue to look forward in hope towards the time when the fullness of church life can be safely resumed.

Your Executive Team

KP Hong, Barbara Hubbard, Kathy Hurt

## Blue Holidays Service

**Wednesday, December 15 • 7:00 p.m. • In-person only, Ames Chapel**

For some, the holidays accentuate the sorrow or loneliness or despair we all carry. Join Rev. Karen Hering and Ahmed Anzaldúa for an evening chapel service of poetry, music, meditation, and sharing.

## Las Posadas Family Sunday

**Sunday, December 19 • In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.**

**Livestream at 9:00 a.m. only: [youtu.be/VG8K16b\\_UVU](https://youtu.be/VG8K16b_UVU)**

As we await the birth of wonder, the whole church family will gather for the story of *Las Posadas* (the Inns). The service will invite us to journey with Mary and Joseph as they search for a place for their baby to be born, even as we wonder how our church may be a place of welcome in the dark mid-winter days.

## Find A Stillness

**Friday, December 24 • 10:00 a.m. • In-person only, Ames Chapel**

In the full rush of Christmas Eve morning we will gather in the quiet of Ames Chapel for reflection, music, and extended periods of silence, making time for relief and contemplation. An invitation to join in communion will also be included.

## Family Lessons & Carols

**Friday, December 24 • 7:00 p.m.**

**In-person in the Sanctuary and via livestream at [youtu.be/ICachIVNJCQ](https://youtu.be/ICachIVNJCQ)**

Come hear lessons old and new as we read the traditional Christmas story and contemporary reflections on the meaning of the holiday. Join in the familiar carols, light a candle, and celebrate this silent and holy night.

## Tolling of Bells

**Sunday, January 2, 2022 • In-person at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.**

**Livestream at 9:00 a.m.: [youtu.be/9SsaWJAv4QY](https://youtu.be/9SsaWJAv4QY)**

We begin each new year with a memorial service for those who have died in the previous year. If you would like to have a candle lit to honor someone you loved and lost in 2021, please share their name, your name, and a phrase or sentence describing their attributes using this link: [bit.ly/tollingbells21](https://bit.ly/tollingbells21).

## Mitten Tree

Decorate our mitten trees with warm hats, gloves, scarves, and mittens! All donated items should be new or like new. Children's items will be distributed to families through Obama Elementary. Adult items will be distributed through Amicus. Trees are standing in the main lobby at the Portland entrance and on the lower level in the Whitman lobby.

## Holiday Boutique

**Sunday, December 5 and 12**

**After Services • Parish Hall**

Bolivian-made sweaters, totes, shawls, scarves, hats, tablecloths, and more from Mano a Mano. Hand-sewn and quilted table runners, wall-hangings, bags, purses, ornaments, and other gift items from Evergreen Quilters.

## Wreaths and Cookies

Unity's high school group will once again sell wreaths and made-from-scratch cookies to raise money to support their activities including the annual Boston pilgrimage. On sale Sunday morning, December 5.

## Unitarians Under the Mistletoe

**Wednesday, December 8 • 7:00 p.m.**

Register: [bit.ly/mistletoeunitarians](https://bit.ly/mistletoeunitarians)

What can we learn from the way our Unitarian ancestors understood and framed the Christmas season?

## Santa Pause

**Wednesday, December 8**

**6:30-8:30 p.m. • Parish Hall**

Holiday fun for kids at church so you can finish making gifts, plan gatherings, or take a moment's pause during this full season. Crafts, games, and a movie for children ages 3 to 10 (no dinner this year). Older kids can volunteer to join in the holiday spirit. RSVP by Monday, December 6, at [unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.html](https://unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.html).

## Sing in the Candlelight Choir

On Christmas Eve at 7:00 p.m. as part of that evening's service. Details on page 15.

# WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

*In-person multi-generational Wellspring Wednesday chapel is now held 6:00-6:30 p.m. each week in the Ames Chapel. Wellspring Wednesday programming, including opportunities for fellowship, learning, and spiritual deepening, are offered online. Unless otherwise noted, you can use the registration link right up until the program starts to participate. Please join us – and invite a friend!*

December 1 • 7:00-8:30 PM

## Honoring Water Protectors

In-Person in the Sanctuary • Livestream at [youtu.be/QcoulK9IYoQ](https://youtu.be/QcoulK9IYoQ)



Photographer John Kaul, along with Water Protectors Sharon Day and Tania Aubid, will discuss the ongoing efforts to protect the waters of North America. Particular attention will be given to the protests against the Dakota Access Line at Standing Rock and Line 3 in Minnesota. Kaul's photo exhibit in the Elliot Wing documents these efforts and will be highlighted during the program.

December 8 • 7:00-8:30 PM

## A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul: Lectio Divina

Online • Register: [bit.ly/Lectio21-22](https://bit.ly/Lectio21-22)

In this invitation to receive the wisdom and gifts of poetry, each session engages the group in hearing a particular poem read aloud multiple times, listening for "what is found there." Rather than analyzing the poem, group members, led by Shelley Butler, will lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. For those who love or are curious about poetry, this practice is a rich way to receive its gifts in a small group setting. Drop-in attendance is welcome. Register once to attend one or all future sessions on the second Wednesday of each month.

## Open Page Writing Session: This Embodied Life

Online • Register: [bit.ly/DecOpenPage](https://bit.ly/DecOpenPage)

How do the old stories of incarnation and our own contemporary experience together illuminate our understanding of this embodied life — its beauty and brokenness and blessings all teaching us the oneness in which body and spirit belong? This session, led by Rev. Karen Hering, offers a reflection on the holiness nested within our world.

## Unitarians Underneath the Mistletoe

Online • Register: [bit.ly/mistletoeunitarians](https://bit.ly/mistletoeunitarians)

As the Christmas season returns, what can we learn from the way our Unitarian ancestors understood and framed the season? In this session, we'll listen to our heretical additions to Christmas carols, read excerpts from Unitarian Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, consider Rev. Kathy Hurt's theological background on Unitarian Christianity, and talk over your take on Christmas in small groups. Join us under the mistletoe!

## Coming in January to Wellspring Wednesday

After December 8, Wellspring Wednesday will take a winter break and resume on January 5. Details will be available in the January newsletter, but you can register now for the following programs!

### January 5

Act for the Earth presents on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Register: [bit.ly/AfECSA](https://bit.ly/AfECSA)

### January 12

Lectio Divina: Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul

Register: [bit.ly/Lectio21-22](https://bit.ly/Lectio21-22)

### January 19

Open Page Writing Session  
Writing Our Way Toward Courage

Register: [bit.ly/JanOpenPage](https://bit.ly/JanOpenPage)

Spiritual Introverts and Extraverts

Register: [bit.ly/RevDrKathyJan](https://bit.ly/RevDrKathyJan)

### January 26

"ReMembering: Singing Water" a film viewing and discussion with OneVoice Mixed Chorus

Register: [bit.ly/SingingWaterWW](https://bit.ly/SingingWaterWW)

## Submit a Proposal for a Wellspring Wednesday Program

Is there a program or class you would like to see offered — or that you would like to offer — at Wellspring Wednesday in 2022? We would love to hear from you! Make a proposal online at [unityunitarian.org/ww-proposal.html](https://unityunitarian.org/ww-proposal.html).

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICE / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

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## December Qigong and Tai Ji Practice

Tuesday, December 7 and 21 • Noon-1:00 p.m.

In-person at Unity Church

Tai Ji teacher Lisa Schlingerman will guide participants through a series of warm ups, Qigong movements, meditations and introduce the five Moving Forces Tai Ji form. The practice is safe and gentle for people of all ages and can be done standing or sitting. No experience necessary. Wear comfortable shoes and loose clothing if possible. A free will offering will be taken. RSVP to [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org).

## 2022 Threshold Series

"If you are in the midst of or on the brink of a major life change, the Thresholds Series is an excellent opportunity to find community support, spiritual practices, explorations in poetry and art that can uplift your soul. I recommend it to anyone encountering fear, sadness, loss or even joy upon embracing a threshold to be crossed in their lives." — Paul Gade, 2018 Thresholder

The 2022 Thresholds series, facilitated by Karen Hering and offered in person at the church, still has a few openings for the group starting early January. If you are crossing a threshold in your life — a change in relationship, work, home, roles, identity or abilities that feels like a turning point, chosen or not — apply soon to join this year's program. The facilitated small group meets four Saturdays, January 8-February 26. Group size is limited and pre-registration is required. Details and registration are online at [unityunitarian.org/thresholds.html](http://unityunitarian.org/thresholds.html). Registration will be confirmed by December 23.

"I found in it a spirit of kindness and empathy. It was a chance for my soul to catch up with me before making decisions about what's next." — Clover Earl, 2018 Thresholder

## Chalice Circles

Want to join a chalice circle but didn't sign up in September? Here's your chance to join a circle at the start of the new year. Registration is open for the following in-person circles set to begin in January:

- Third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.
- Fourth Thursday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

The circles, led by trained facilitators, meet once monthly from January through June as an invitation to experience the spiritual practice of conversation — both speaking and listening from the heart with a small group of 6-10 people. Each month, participants receive a packet with readings, podcasts, short videos, and other resources related to the month's theme. They choose one spiritual exercise and a deep question from the packet to spend time with over several weeks. Near the end of the month, the group gathers to share their experiences. Register online at: [unityunitarian.org/chalice-circle-registration.html](http://unityunitarian.org/chalice-circle-registration.html).

## Fellowship Group Meetings

Please contact the person listed for information about meeting locations. For more conversation about getting connected at Unity Church, contact Laura Park at [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org).

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

**Caregivers Group** meets on the third Thursday of the month. Contact: Karen Hering, [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org)

**Evergreen Quilters:** This quilting 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** meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Contact: Karen Hering, [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org)

**Five Animal Kung Fu** meets Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.-noon. Contact Barney Kujawski, [barney.kujawski@gmail.com](mailto:barney.kujawski@gmail.com)

**Living With Grief Group** meets on the third Tuesday of the month. Contact: Karen Hering, [karen@unityunitarian.org](mailto:karen@unityunitarian.org)

**Men's Breakfast Group** meets monthly on the first Saturday for breakfast in the Parish Hall from 8:30-10:00 a.m. Contact Tom Zell, [tomzell@me.com](mailto:tomzell@me.com)

**Men's Coffee Group** meets every other Wednesday, December 1, 15, 29, at 10:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation. Contact Tom Zell, [tomzell@me.com](mailto:tomzell@me.com)

**Men's Conversation Group** meets Mondays, December 13 and 27, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, [tmcdanel@gmail.com](mailto:tmcdanel@gmail.com)

**Men's Retirement Circle:** Monday, December 6 and 20, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, [tomzell@me.com](mailto:tomzell@me.com)

**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** meets Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Contact Dayna Kennedy, [daynamelissa@icloud.com](mailto:daynamelissa@icloud.com)

**Textile Arts Group** meets online the first and third Wednesday of each month, December 1 and 15, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc. Contact Johanna Stammeier-Toole to get the Zoom meeting link, [johanna2le@gmail.com](mailto:johanna2le@gmail.com)

**Unity Book Club** meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, [jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net](mailto:jack.hawthorne@centurylink.net). Upcoming discussions include:

December 14: *The Socrates Express; In Search of Life Lessons from Dead Philosophers* by Eric Weiner

January 11: *State of Terror* by Hillary Rodham Clinton and Louise Penny

February 8: *How Iceland Changed the World: The Big History of a Small Island* by Egill Bjarnason

**Women In Retirement** meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Laura Park, [laura@unityunitarian.org](mailto:laura@unityunitarian.org)

**Young Adult Group (ages 18-35):** To join the YA email list, please email [kp@unityunitarian.org](mailto:kp@unityunitarian.org).

# LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL / ART TEAM



## The Library-Bookstall Team

*Good Books for Cozying Up this Winter*

**Shelley Butler, Library-Bookstall Team**

There is snow on the ground! Why is it that many of us seem to experience a blackout when it comes to winter? I've been on this good earth for a few years now but looking out the window at the first snow of the season, it's as if I'd never seen the white stuff before. But it does bring to mind a hot beverage and a good book. Fortunately, the Unity Anderson Library and the Bookstall have been well-stocked with interesting new fiction and non-fiction since the church re-opened.

One such book is *Owls of the Eastern Ice: A Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owl* by Jonathan C. Slaght. Picador, 2021. It would take several pages to list all the accolades for this exciting five-year adventure story to find again the elusive and endangered Blakiston's fish owl. Anderson Library 598 S.

Many of you may have read the hugely popular *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens already as over 10 million copies have been sold (Putnam's Sons, 2021, paperback), but I thought I'd mention it because it holds a special place in my heart; Tom Merritt gave me a copy on the Sunday before Unity closed in March 2020. I didn't know that would be the last time I would see Tom and didn't get to tell him that I loved it as he did. When we reopened this fall, I added his copy to the Anderson Library as promised, call # 813.6 0.

Other books of note include *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* by Katherine May (Riverhead Books, 2020); and new titles by Thich Nhat Hanh, adrienne maree brown, Anne Lamott, Julia Cameron, and Kao Kalia Yang.

**Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts, Vol. 13, 2021** will be out in December, and available to purchase from the Unity Bookstall in the Parish Hall on Sunday mornings, or to pre-order or order from the Unity Online Bookstall: [bit.ly/UnityOnlineBooks](https://bit.ly/UnityOnlineBooks).

**Coming January-February 2022:**

**The Unity Congregation Book Read**

Read *The Seed Keeper* by Diane Wilson in January and watch for announcements of February book discussions

**New in the Justice Database**

**The Black Wall Street Times, motto: Access is the New Civil Right**, is a national Black-owned digital newspaper for people of color and their dedicated allies. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/JusticeData>.



## Parish Hall Artist: Emel Sherzad

This is about the awareness of art's global value in a violent world.

- I was born in Afghanistan to a privileged family where dedication to visual arts and music was of the utmost importance across generations.
- For the past decades, my country of birth has lived through the horrors of war and destabilization.
- My family has endured the consequences of that upheaval. Many were executed and the rest imprisoned and then exiled.

I was a political prisoner at the age of 16. After forcibly leaving Afghanistan, I became a refugee in Switzerland with nothing but the shirt on my back, having to start my life over again from scratch. Not only had I lost my homeland, but I had also seen its rape. The suffering of its population witnessed from afar, made me angry and confused.

The prevalent European racism further complicated my struggle by adding an acute identity crisis. Who am I and where do I belong? Do I have a home?

It was my love for art and music that saved me from becoming bitter. It convinced me that despite it all, the world was full of beauty, with countless human beings creating that beauty in every moment. It is this love that has kept me from despair and to which I owe not only my sanity, but my deep sense of optimism.

Since coming to the U.S. as an immigrant and to Minnesota, to attend Macalester College, I have befriended many artists. I have hosted a weekly radio program, International Jazz Conspiracy, on KFAI "Fresh Air" Community Radio since 1994. I have also had the pleasure of hosting a weekly live music concert series at our restaurant, Khyber Pass Café (pre COVID-19). Artists presented various forms of improvised music at those gatherings. The relationships that I have forged with all these creative souls have made me realize that after all, I have found my tribe. I am home.

When I think of all the suffering around the world and find myself involved in art, I realize how privileged I am and what a luxurious life I lead, regardless of the size of my bank account.

As for my painting, it is inspired and instigated by my passion for improvisation and unpredictability. When I paint, I am able to connect with the inner child. It is a sense of curiosity that compels me to make a mark on a canvas, and see what happens when I let chance take over. It becomes a playful journey, where there is no plan, just improvisation. I think of life in the same way, where so many elements are unpredictable. It is dance to an unknown tune, where we try to reconcile our contradictions. Art is a window into another human being's soul. Through art we identify with the other. Art allows us to connect with humanity across time and space. Art is a bridge that obliterates borders and divisions. Through art, we identify with people of different backgrounds. Art reminds us that there is magic in every moment.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

## Climate and Justice, A Shared Path

Discussion with Two Unity Members on the People vs. Fossil Fuels Action

Sunday, December 5 • 1:30–3:00 p.m.

Online via Zoom; register here: [bit.ly/afesharedpath](https://bit.ly/afesharedpath)

Join Claire Cooke and Jean Hammink, two Unity members who are part of the Act for the Earth Outreach Ministry Team for a discussion on their experience traveling to Washington, D.C., in October for five days of action, witness, and civil disobedience. The event, People vs Fossil Fuels was organized as an answer to a call from Indigenous and other BIPOC communities who for generations have been most impacted by the harm from fossil fuels. Climate and Justice, A Shared Path will be a discussion with Jean and Claire, moderated by Shay McKay. They will share photos and learnings from this experience, as well as offer deeper reflections on the spiritual, emotional, and psychological insights they gained.

People vs Fossil Fuels was a week of action led by BIPOC, frontline community leaders that aimed to put pressure on President Biden requesting that he use his executive powers to 1) end oil and gas leasing and permitting on federal lands and 2) declare a national climate crisis. The underlying intent was to bring attention to the environmental justice fights occurring right now in frontline communities all over the U.S., and to build people power. This was executed through marches, speeches, songs, prayers, community building, and acts of civil disobedience. In this forum, Claire and Jean will reflect on the week, the experience of being arrested, and invite questions and discussion about what was learned and experienced.

Here is a short excerpt from Claire's report back reflections on the joint path of Climate and Justice . If you can, please read the full report at [bit.ly/ccookereflects](https://bit.ly/ccookereflects):

*The fossil fuels industry puts many communities in harm's way through both the destruction and pollution brought on through the extractive process, as well as through the crisis brought on by a changing climate. These impacted areas are made into sacrifice zones and the communities that reside there, the people that reside there become sacrifices as well. Most often these sacrificed people are people of color. This is environmental racism (check out [Hop Hopkins — "Racism is Killing the Planet"](#) for more on this). In this way, the use of fossil fuels both does harm to the interconnected web of life and systematically devalues the worth of some people. If our goal as Unitarian Universalists is truly as our 6th principle says, "The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all", then we must act. I am not saying that you must be here in DC on the front lines. But your faith does call you to act, to act today and to continue to act in an ever more present and impactful manner.*

You can also find more information on People vs Fossil Fuels at the action's website [peoplevsfossilfuels.org](https://peoplevsfossilfuels.org).



## Joyful Urgency: A Beacon Convening

The Beacon collaborative has shown tremendous power and resilience over the last year, working hard to shelter families, create homes, and advocate for a vision that all people have a home. They have continued to lead the growing Bring it Home, Minnesota campaign by stepping boldly into new policy campaigns and pushing the Met Council and City of Minneapolis to live into their commitment to creating homes for those at the lowest incomes.



It is time to celebrate this great work and move forward in joyful urgency! You are invited to the first Beacon Congregational Convening since the start of the pandemic. This event will be a great introduction to Beacon for those new to their work and nourishment for the journey for everyone working for the vision that all people have a home.

**Beacon Convening**  
**Thursday, December 9**  
**6:30-8:30 p.m.**

Online: [beaconinterfaith.org/event/beacon-convening](https://beaconinterfaith.org/event/beacon-convening)

In-person: St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 8400 France Avenue South, Bloomington, MN 55431

This is a hybrid event, and everyone has the option of joining us either in person or online via Zoom (the link will be shared with you upon registration).

Masks are required for anyone attending in person. Accessible parking, seating, and bathrooms are available on site, and St. Stephen Lutheran Church welcomes all regardless of gender, sexual identity, religious preference, or ethnic heritage. Closed captioning will be available on Zoom.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

## Holiday Boutique

*Evergreen Quilters and Mano a Mano*

**Sunday, December 5 and 12 • After Services • Parish Hall**

- 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 handmade 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.

## Obama School Outreach Ministry Team

**Karen Abraham, Mike Carls, Pat and John Christiansen, Diane Grasse, Nancy Heege, David Smith**

We've received word from the assistant principal at Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School that they do not feel safe at this time to welcome volunteers into the building. Over the fall, several classrooms have been quarantined due to COVID-19 infections and now a couple of vaccinated staff members have tested positive. We will continue to stay in touch with the staff there.

Given the school board discussions about possible school closures and the uncertainty about the future of Obama School, our team is committed to doing what we can to support the teachers, staff, and scholars of the school through this year. A vote on the district's plan — Envision SPPS — has been rescheduled for December 1. Although we haven't been able to volunteer in the school yet, some of us worked to clean up the garden beds near the playground area in October and

others are providing snacks for an after-school staff meeting each month.

We're happy to support the church's Mitten Tree initiative. As in pre-pandemic times, small trees will be set up at the church, waiting for warm winter mittens, scarves, and hats. We invite you to contribute new or like new children's items, which will be shared with Obama School families.

We will continue to monitor the evolving situation and keep you informed.



## Support Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

*Donations are needed to feed families through the holidays!*

During October, 164 pounds of food was donated by church members and friends to Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf! Thank you!

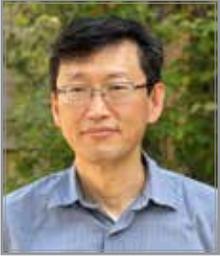
These are difficult times and the holidays will stretch the financial resources of many people in our community. Please consider bringing one food item every time you come to church whether it is for Sunday worship or a meeting.

Help the food shelf get ready for the holidays! Please donate the following items:

- Corn bread and biscuit mix, cake mix, shelf-stable pie crusts, pie filling
- Canned green beans, corn, pumpkin, cranberries, and sweet potato
- Boxed potatoes, stuffing mix, rice, gravy
- Cranberry sauce, canned fruit
- Spices, sugar, flour

Let's continue to support the wonderful work of our community food shelf and bring holiday cheer, and much needed food security, to the community. Thank you.





## Pitter-pattering Questions

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

**Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation**

Have you ever talked about the Incarnation with a Franciscan? A reading of representative sources from the early church teachings makes apparent the consensus regarding the

Incarnation: God became flesh for the sake of our redemption. As early as the fourth century, Saint Ambrose asked, “What was the cause of the Incarnation if not the redemption of the flesh that had sinned?” Augustine similarly declared, “If man had not sinned, the Son of Man would not have come.” And Aquinas concluded that “the work of the Incarnation was ordained by God as a remedy for sin, so that, if sin had not existed, the Incarnation would not have been.”

But then my Franciscan friends smile and remind me that there was blessed John Duns Scotus, the Franciscan friar and theologian who offered a radically differing understanding of the Incarnation: God becomes incarnate in human form *not* as a response to human failing but because love has to become what it loves. In fact, Scotus’ argument led to perhaps the most startling conclusion of all, that before intending anything else, *God created the world in order for the Incarnation to occur*. Incarnation was the whole purpose of creation, not a contingency plan after the preferred method failed. “The birth of the [holy child] is the masterpiece of love in a world designed for love, not a divine plumber come to fix the mess of original sin.” (Philippe Yates) And so it is with the birth of every child, love fiercely enfleshed — not to fix or leverage as means to some other end — but love claiming its incumbent place in a world with all its pain and possibility, beauty and brokenness, grief and glory.

Such a theology of Incarnation pulses at heart of our relational ministry with children, a relational ministry not reduced to a tool for influence or instrumental means to another end, but relationship itself as sacred end. Perhaps with the 2020 Gallup poll showing continued decline in membership in houses of worship (dropping below 50% for the first time in Gallup’s decades-long trend) faith communities and religious educators may be tempted to bid for greater respectability, justifying our work on the basis of providing “educational goods” and “civic responsibility” and “psychosocial value” of peer groups that support adolescent development. Who would grumble with that? But the practice of incarnation and relational ministry is not fundamentally about creating “good teenagers” or “wholesome youth programs” under a “salvation by education” model. Rather, it’s about incarnation as accompaniment, as radical participation in the personhood of our children wherein they discover transcendence and an identity of immeasurable proportions that cannot be bargained for a mess of pottage. It’s about our children discovering that they are enfleshed love and the site of divine presence in the world. As believed in the Franciscan tradition, is that not itself sufficient to redeem the world?

*Sharing questions that pitter-patter across our sacred journeys...*

**Mitten Tree, Santa Pause, High School Wreaths and Cookies!**

See page 8

## UU Families Meal Ritual Workshop

Would you like family mealtime to feel more centered and provide a regular sense of connection for your family? Unity's UU Families Initiative invites you to virtually attend a meal ritual workshop. Families with kids of all ages will learn a simple ritual to do at the beginning of meals. Here's what one parent says about their family's experience with the meal ritual:

*I grew up in a Christian household that said grace together before meals, so having a UU-specific ritual to use in that context with my own family filled a hole I'd been feeling. At the same time, the sentiments are universal enough that when we've shared them with our extended family of other (or no) faiths, our UU ritual has often become the go-to way to begin those meals together. We've used it for years, and it's an integral part of our family life now.*

This workshop has two parts. The first meeting is a parent orientation on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, from 8:00-9:00 p.m. The second meeting is on Sunday, January 23, at 5:00 p.m., so the entire family can learn and practice the ritual with a meal at home. As part of this workshop families are provided with supplies for each child to make a chalice that is used during the ritual.

Please register by January 10:

[bit.ly/uufamilymeal](https://bit.ly/uufamilymeal)

# MUSIC MINISTRY



## Music Notes

**Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries**

Music is an enormous part of marking the Christmas season and other beloved traditions, and one of the hardest things to let go. In 2020 we worked hard to create a virtual Christmas Eve service as well as carrying out many of Unity's holiday traditions online. They helped fill a void during a very dark time, but also came nowhere close to replicating the experience of being together in person.

Thanks to the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine, a scientific achievement that is nothing short of miraculous, we have the opportunity to gather in person to make music this holiday season. We will need to make some compromises to do it safely but, after the year we've had, I hope that we all realize that we cannot take for granted the privilege of being together during the darkest time of the year. I hope we can all find joy in what is possible now.

This year, I'd like to invite you to sing in the Candlelight Choir, a group that comes together to sing at the last Christmas Eve service. While this service normally takes place at 10:00 p.m., this year we will combine two services into one, so things will be a little different. Here is everything you need to know...

### *When is the Candlelight Choir singing?*

On Christmas Eve at 7:00 p.m. as part of that evening's Christmas Eve service. See page 8 for more information about Christmas Eve services.

### *When are rehearsals?*

Thursday, December 23, 7:30–9:00 p.m., and Friday, December 24, 5:15 to 6:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary.

### *Do I have to attend all the rehearsals?*

You are welcome at both rehearsals, but only need to attend one of them to sing in the service.

### *Are there any special skills needed?*

While it helps to be able to read a music score and to have experience singing in choir, it is not a dealbreaker if you have neither of those. There will be plenty of people in the room happy to support you wherever you are in your musical journey.

### *What are the requirements to sing?*

People of all ages are welcome. However, minors should have an adult with them. As with all choral music at Unity Church at this time, you will be asked to fill out an online form confirming that you have received your COVID-19 vaccine (and booster if eligible). You will need to wear a mask at all times. We will have some mask inserts that can make masked singing more comfortable and less muffled.

## Border CrosSing Presents

### Navidad Criolla

Every holiday season since its founding, Border CrosSing has presented some version of our acclaimed program "El Mesías," featuring a bilingual version of Handel's *Messiah*. Due to the difficulties of staging such a large production in the midst of a pandemic, this year we will present a new program: "Navidad Criolla." This is a concert of Baroque music from Peru, Mexico, and Bolivia to celebrate the Christmas season, highlighting centuries-old traditions that would have accompanied the holiday celebrations in Puebla, Cuzco, and Lima.

The concerts are Saturday, December 18, at 7:00 p.m., at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Saint Paul, and Sunday, December 19, at 4:00 p.m., at Church of the Ascension in Minneapolis.

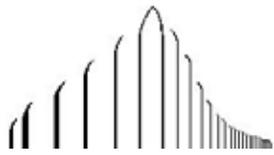
Tickets are pay-as-you-will the day of the concert.

## December Hymn Sings

These are Zoom conversations about the hymns in our hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*. We sing each hymn and discuss its history, poetry, music, and theology. We started with hymn #1 earlier this year, and now we are more than a hundred hymns in!

These sessions are open to everyone, including family and friends, and will continue to be offered as an alternative to singing in-person for those that are unvaccinated or not yet ready to participate in-person.

Saturday, December 4, 10:00-11:30 a.m., and Thursday, December 30, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Email [ahmed@unityunitarian.org](mailto:ahmed@unityunitarian.org) to participate.



# UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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## Honoring Water Protectors

*Photo Exhibit and Presentation*

**Wednesday, December 1 • 7:00 p.m.**

**Details on page 9**



## Cairns Vol. 13 • On sale in December!



*Blue Holidays    Las Posadas    Lesson and Carols*

*Mitten Tree    Tower Club Wreaths and Cookies*

*Mano a Mano & Evergreen Quilters Holiday Boutique*

*Unitarians Under the Mistletoe    Santa Pause*

*Candlelight Choir    Tolling of Bells*

*Details on page 8*

