

Wonder

Each month, we gather to reflect on and discuss the monthly theme. The December theme of wonder provoked much generative conversation. This article includes both theological and personal reflections on the theme of wonder, with the hope that it inspires and stimulates your own.

While this article was being written, Saint Paul had its first major snow of the fall. It's coming down with no sign of abatement! Our Transcendentalist ancestor Ralph Waldo Emerson attended church during a snowstorm and noted the disconnect between the wonder of the snowstorm and the anemic preaching he experienced. He wrote:

I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say, I would go to church no more. A snow storm was falling around us. The snow storm was real; the preacher merely spectral; and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him, into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession, namely, to convert life into truth, he had not learned... The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life — life passed through the fire of thought.

Emerson recounted this memory in the Harvard Divinity School address in July 1838. In that speech to the soon-to-be new ministers, he challenged the students to inculcate a greater sense of wonder into their ministries. Emerson and other Transcendentalists were both heady intellectuals and were deeply aware of the need for a sense of curiosity and wonder as part of the religious and spiritual life. They would often reflect on wonder and miracles as manifestations of the same impulse.

Again, Emerson wrote:

All our life is a miracle. Ourselves are the greatest wonder of all. I can believe a miracle because I can raise my own arm...

As singer-songwriter Paul Simon once wrote "these are the days of miracle and wonder..." And indeed, the days of December hold many wonderful spiritual celebrations. Buddha found enlightenment in December. The miracle of Hannukah's eight days tells of the light that would not die. December 21 brings the winter solstice and Yule a time of introspection and wonder at the power and beauty of the ever-changing seasons. Christmas brings carols, songs and stories about the birth of a child who became one of the world's greatest spiritual teachers. And at the end of December, Kinara candles are lit as part of the spiritual practice of engaging with the seven principles of Kwanzaa. There is something about the coming of winter and the encroaching darkness that evokes a sense of wonder.

There are at least three different ways to think about wonder. The first is linked to curiosity about the forming edge of possibilities. In our faith formation classes, we ask our children to consider the world framed by the questions "what if" and "as if." We wonder — "what if the peoples of the world acted not out of self-interest, but in the interest of another's well-being?" or "could we act as if the Beloved Community were already here?"

A second definition is associated with doubt, as in "I wonder about the sincerity of a politician's promises," or, "I wonder about how you're really doing." It's a kinder, gentler way of asking what is behind the words

said or the emotions expressed. To wonder out loud is a way of expressing concern.

But this month, we want to explore the wonder that captures our imagination and attention at this time of year: wonder as that quality of rapt attention or astonishment at something awesome, mysterious or new to our experience. It is the emotion or feeling most associated with the holiday season of Christmas, with its fantastic stories of a star that marks the birth of a child, the special music and, in our part of the world, the advent of winter with all its attendant beauty.

Which bring us back to Emerson's snowstorm again. Emerson had the ability to see the miraculous in the ordinary. A snowstorm becomes a symbol of meaning beyond the moment; it opens up a window of seeing the world anew. Whether you celebrate Bodhi Day or eight days of Hannukah, solstice, Yule or Kwanzaa, we hope that in each of December's ordinary miraculous days you remember Emerson's wise counsel who said: "Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year."

*By Rev. Kathleen Rolenz
and this month's theme team:
Drew Danielson, Tom Duke,
Karen Gustafson, KP Hong, and
Andrea La Sonde Anastos*

Wonder Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme please see this month's Spiritual Practice Packet which will be available online at unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html.

IN THE MEANTIME / WHEEL OF LIFE



In the Meantime

Reflections from Unity's Interim Senior Minister

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

Welcome to December's theme of wonder! As an interim, I often find myself asking "I wonder what would happen if I..." or "I wonder how it feel if I..." Wondering is the first question before any action is taken. As an interim, I do a lot of "wondering" about the way the church expresses its identity.

One of those ways is through their worship service, also known as the liturgy. Liturgy literally means "the people's work." Liturgy is the result of a congregation's history and of how previous ministers and ministries have interpreted what worship look and feels like in *this* setting.

Having been an interim minister since 2016, I've experienced a congregation's liturgy that is both similar and unique to each congregation. One congregation which began as a fellowship continued to have a talk back after the sermon in the worship service. Another begins their worship with a celebratory musical processional. Yet another moved the offering and announcements to *after* the sermon. They all worked!

As your interim, my job is to both illuminate the corners of your congregational life that have been unquestioned for a long time, *and* to continue to support those aspects which bring your comfort and joy. Your liturgy has been carefully crafted and shaped over many years. There is an integrity to the way you currently worship. This fall, I've wanted to honor what you currently do by keeping the exact same format that you have used for many years.

Beginning in January, I'd like to experiment with some modest changes to your liturgy. I'll do this in collaboration with our worship associates, our music director, the Interim Monitoring Team (see info at right); and with input from the executive team. And, of course, I always welcome hearing from *you*. I take your advice, your suggestions, and your constructive critiques seriously.

I am so grateful that many of you have written to me that you have found this fall's worship services inspiring and meaningful. I'm grateful for the many ways in which you continue to love and support and engage with your church. And, I am so grateful to be on this journey of discovery with you. As we enter this holiday season, may each of you find ways to celebrate this season of wonder — to appreciate ever more deeply the bonds of community and friendship which are so very much a part of Unity Church—Unitarian.

Yours in wonder and gratitude,

Kathleen

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Ariel Dickerman

October 5, 1934-

October 27, 2022

Donna Gustafson

November 9, 1928-

November 4, 2022

Murray King Reed

February 14, 1927-

November 9, 2022

Interim Monitoring Team

Every interim minister is expected to create a transitions team, or as its called here at Unity, an Interim Monitoring Team which is composed of lay leaders who meet monthly with the interim minister. They have two primary areas of focus:

1. To understand interim ministry and to help interpret interim ministry to the congregation and;
2. To provide insight, wisdom, advice and support to the interim minister so that her decisions and course of action are grounded in the congregation's history and identity.

With work unique to the tasks of interim ministry, persons are generally recommended to the interim minister by the board. They serve one-year terms, renewable for a second year.

The Interim Monitoring Team provides important feedback to the interim minister about how the ministry is going. They don't bring anonymous concerns to the meeting; however, they will provide a supportive presence if you wish to bring specific concerns or complaints to the interim minister.

2022-2023 Interim Monitoring Team: George Anastos, Andrea Anastos, Beverly Heydinger, Peggy Linn, John Sherman, and Finn Schneider.

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

Unity Church—Unitarian
733 Portland Avenue, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-228-1456 | www.unityunitarian.org



DECEMBER SUNDAY SERVICES AND OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Worship Services

Unity Church offers two in-person services each Sunday at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. (except where noted). The 9:00 a.m. service is offered via livestream. Religious Education for children and youth is also offered during both services.

December 4: *The Rebirth of Wonder*

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

Livestream: youtu.be/GRSHd8nYwkM

“And I am waiting... for the rebirth of wonder” writes the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti. After November’s sermons of mourning with Job and facing down the apocalypse, we’ll now explore what it looks and feels like to be steeped in and embraced by wonder. This service will include a Celebration of New Lives.

December 11: *The Church of the Future*

Rev. David Pyle, Regional Lead, UUA MidAmerica Region

Livestream: youtu.be/3bmN6i5sM-g

These last few years have changed us, both as human beings and as the religious communities that we create. While the ways that congregations are adapting to meet the challenges and opportunities of the times varies by congregational mission and culture, there are some patterns and trends that are developing across congregational lines, and some new roles that faith communities are being called upon to play in the post-pandemic world.

December 18: *Everyone’s Nativity*

Christmas Family Sunday

Carol Sing at 9:00 a.m., Carol Shout at 11:00 a.m.

Livestream: youtu.be/DxKsZzKWxo0

Have you ever wondered what would happen if we treated every birth as though it were the birth of a savior? What might the world be like if we claimed our own and each other’s divine spark in the celebration of each new life?

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

Turn to page 8 for Christmas Eve Services.



December 25: *Small Wonders*

One service at 10:00 a.m.

In-person only. This service will not be livestreamed.

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

A simple service of poetry, song, silence and sharing — about the wonders in your life, both great and small.

January 1: One service at 10:00 a.m.

January 8: Tolling of Bells, services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Offering Recipients

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

December 4

WE WIN Institute is a nonprofit, community-based organization primarily serving Black youth ages 5-18. WE WIN offers year-round programs that provide academic and social support that utilizes a multi-cultural and afro-centric approach to education and academic success. Their programs strive to support the academic, social, emotional, and physical growth of participants; develop leadership skills; and provide youth with academic and life readiness skills. Unity Church member Ray Wiedmeyer is a supporter of WE WIN. we-win.org

December 11

St. Paul’s Listening House is a daytime shelter for people experiencing poverty, homelessness, and loneliness. Guests can relax, clean up, get a bite to eat, and receive services from professional staff including comprehensive public health information. This collection will support the purchase of winter clothing and personal sanitation supplies for guests. Unity Church member Bernie Troje is a longtime Listening House volunteer. listeninghouse.org

December 18

Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery serves as a trusted resource for families by offering free, voluntary services that support parents who face barriers such as unemployment, homelessness, medical or mental health concerns, poverty, domestic violence, or other difficult situations. Crisis Nursery helps strengthen families by connecting them to resources, caring for their children during difficult times, and setting goals that promote stability and make the relationship between the parent and child stronger. Unity Church is a regular supporter of this critical community outreach. crisisnursery.org

December 25

The Ministers’ Discretionary Fund helps Unity Church ministers serve congregation and community members facing crisis and in need of immediate financial assistance.

Nominate an Offering Recipient

If you would like to nominate an organization to receive the offering, please complete the online nomination form at unityunitarian.org/sunday-offering.html.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / PLEDGE DRIVE UPDATE



Moving Forward Together

Debbie Cushman, Trustee

Thank you to everyone who attended the Forward Together: Next Steps gathering

on November 5. It was important to spend time reflecting on our many understandings about the search for a settled minister. If you would like to engage with content from the meeting, please visit the Ministerial Transition page under the Connect tab on Unity's website where there's a recording of the Zoom meeting, the accompanying PowerPoint slides and related documents.

As we move forward together, I find myself stepping into spaces where there are some things we do know... and I also experience the confusion and wonder of not knowing, and venturing into spaces that hold a multiplicity of truths and options.

Beginning the search anew, to be sure, will be a journey. The excitement and anxiety surrounding any long trip is that it will have hills and valleys, hazards and delights, sunshine and storms. Our lizard brains are well programmed to help us worry about the saber-toothed tiger around the next bend. That ancient part of our brain that supports survival is much less helpful when it comes to anticipating an unexpected field of wildflowers or a full moon. What kind of outcome can we count on? And when?

None of us can see the entire path at this moment. It might be nice to speak "settled minister" into our smart phones and watch the instantaneous plotting of digital lines. If we could clearly see multiple options to our destination, maybe one would include scenic highways — more of a guarantee of a pleasant experience. But there's no calm robot voice guiding our way. We don't know about the construction detours. Cloud cover might obscure the full moon.

This in-between space can be worrisome, especially in the context of so much recent loss. But our robust, beautiful and sustaining church life continues. We are blessed to be here.

I think that what we *can* do is chart our course one segment at a time, with faith that each solid step will lead to another part of the path well-traveled. Here are some things Unity's Board of Trustees expects to do, learn, and decide over the next few months:

- Reconvene a policy committee of the board to address procedures and bylaws in order to set ourselves up for a more sustainable search process and vote next time;
- More clearly define the charge to the next search team and establish protocols for routine communication with the board;
- Make a decision — following the Congregational Life Review (likely to be held in February) — about whether to begin again with the ministerial search process this coming spring or wait until the spring of 2024;
- Determine our next steps and timing on a renewal of our Ends Statements;
- Design a plan for comprehensive congregational education and communication around what it means to be "in search" for a settled minister as a member Unitarian Universalist congregation;
- Take specific and deliberate actions to work towards a healthier and more beneficial relationship with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

These action items are not the only things that the board will be working on as we start a new calendar year, but they capture many highlights. This column is your monthly link to goings-on, and you can always check in with a trustee or send an email to board@unityunitarian.org.

As I look ahead, I'm inspired by knowing we have each other as fellow travelers, everyone carrying memories and hopes in a satchel stitched together with love. And I remind myself of our core values of wonder, open-hearted engagement and courageous action... lighting our way and serving as compass, nourishment and inspiration. I'm grateful to be on this journey with all of you.

The Thread We Follow
2023 Unity Church Pledge Drive



Pledge Drive Update

Thank you to all who made pledges during our fall pledge drive. We are fortunate to have you as part of this beloved congregation as we prepare for the powerful and significant days ahead, following the thread that will help us lean into living lives of integrity, service, and joy.

As of the writing of this article in mid-November, we have received 579 commitments for the 2023 operating budget totaling \$1,241,299. Our goal for 2023 is \$1,335,000, leaving \$93,701 left to raise by the end of 2023.

Of those who pledged for 2023, 558 households renewed their 2022 pledges with an average increase of 4.7%. We have 21 new pledges for 2023 at this time. We are waiting to hear from 118 households who pledged in 2022, and if all made pledges for 2023 comparable to their 2022 pledge, we'd reach and exceed our goal.

Capital pledges for 2023 now total \$207,432 from 331 households, which will ensure that we can pay debt service on our long-term note and make other capital repairs and acquisitions.

Pledges are still being gratefully accepted online at unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html.

WELCOME NEWCOMERS / PASTORAL CARE



Welcome Words

Laura Park,
Director of Membership and Hospitality

I love the dual sense of the word wonder, evoking both an open curiosity and a sense of awe. I love how those qualities balance and support each other too, the way that an open curiosity can prepare us to

welcome awe when we find it, the way the sense of awe can pull us back from the cynicism of an overly analytical mind. If you're a newcomer to Unity Church, I hope you're finding support and connection with both qualities of wonder as we enter the holiday season. I hope you're also finding space here for the stillness that allows the experience of wonder to find you, despite the general busyness of the season.

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 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 or 651-228-1456 x110 with questions or to participate.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Sundays • 10:15 a.m.

Gannett Room and online via Zoom: bit.ly/fyonline

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.

December 4: Community Outreach and Social Justice

December 11: Q&A with the Minister

December 18: Building Tour

December 25 and January 1: No class

Committing to Unity

Tuesday, January 17 • 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. • Unity Church

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. Let Laura Park know you're interested in participating!



Pastoral Ponderings

Rev Karen Gustafson,
Interim Minister of Pastoral Care

Recently the question was put to me, "What have you learned in the first 90 days at Unity Church?"

So many ways to answer that I hardly know where to begin: how to navigate

the pathways between Mac and PC, how to find things on Shelby, where the bathrooms are on the upper level, how to disarm the alarm system and so much more. More nuanced are the workings of the schedule and the staff, the embedded traditions and expectations that surprise me and keep me on my toes. So much institutional memory is held in the minds and hearts of the long timers — staff and members who have shaped and been shaped by the unfolding culture that is Unity Church. I am surprised and often delighted by news of some upcoming event that will involve me in unfamiliar ways. This has become especially apparent in the lead up to the winter holiday season.

The pageant and other celebrations of Christmas Eve, Las Posadas and a Christmas cantata, caroling and holiday hymn sing, and a Blue Holiday service for those for whom the griefs of the past eclipse the other feelings associated with the season.

It is remarkable how much power these traditions have to affect us all, for better and for worse as we endeavor to claim our own unique experience in the face of cultural expectations. I have found that one does not need to be grieving or lonely to experience ambivalence around "the holidays." It can be a challenge to find one's place on the continuum between all out joy and celebration, and despair — a place which may well be different every year of our lives. Resources shift, relationships change, circumstances evolve and the juggernaut of joy and merriment bears down regardless. This is a learning I brought with me that shapes my approach to this season.

In some strange way this forced annual hoopla, the rituals and the parties and the special events and, demands for family harmony come in a rush that invites us to find and hold the center that is informed by our faith.

My loving counsel is to take a moment, or many, to find your own particular relationship to this year's holiday season. To sit for a time with a deep and abiding awareness of how you, alive in the context of your own life, are connecting to the spiritual themes of this time — darkness, light, birth, hope, hospitality, uncertainty, gratitude, joy and wonder.

Claim the center that informs your own experience knowing that others may be in a different place with their spirits. May the community that is Unity Church be a place to holds and welcome the whole range of feelings and experiences that center us in this season.

May you find blessings in these days.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Talk Amongst Yourselves... and with Paul, Too

Lia Rivamonte, for the Artist in Residence Team and Beloved Community News

If you get a call from Paul Kruse, you will want to talk to him. It won't be hard — he is easy to talk to. Friendly, unassuming, some might even say mild-mannered, he laughs easily — after all he's from La Crosse for gosh sake. In fact, that may be one of the points he is trying to make with his project, "Once Removed," a series of audio-based performance pieces, the continuation of a previous work of the same name. The happy-go-lucky, lily-white, hetero-normative, binary, nuclear, so-called Christian family once considered the foundation of rural America was always a myth. A fragile construction built of cheap toothpicks easily blown away when you learn the truth.

And how do you learn that truth? You talk to people, give them the space to tell you their stories, and you listen. What are they telling you? What aren't they telling you? Paul has become very good at listening, and digging deeper into that silence.

As Unity's next Artist in Residence, he has already begun his work, interviewing LGBTQ+ members of the congregation, to learn about their experiences growing up Queer— especially if they were raised away from an urban setting.

After earning a degree in filmmaking/ video production at Northwestern University, Paul lived for a brief time in Chicago where he ended up working for a Jesuit-run organization, and had to be talked out of becoming a priest by a wise Jesuit mentor. Invited by friends to join them in Pittsburgh, PA, Paul discovered that an active arts community and affordable rents allowed him to flourish as an artist. It was there that he began playwriting in earnest, and where he and friends founded the Hatch Art Collective (2012-2022) producing work throughout the city of Pittsburgh. In 2020, Paul completed his MFA in playwriting at UT Austin and his work

has received much attention; his plays are produced throughout the country.

Paul's work typically falls into two distinct categories — fiction and documentary. For example, his play "Chickens in the Yard," follows a gay couple as they travel from the families who raised them to the family they make together as seen through the eyes of their four chickens. "Once Removed," is a documentary play, tracing Paul's own coming-out after piecing together the story of his mother's gay cousin who died from HIV/AIDS at the age of 31. It was only when he started asking questions and connected the dots by interviewing his mom and later his aunt and other relatives that he learned the truth.

Drawn to writing for theatre because of its collaborative nature, Paul finds great joy in conversation and in learning about people. His project at Unity is ambitious and will include interviews with people beyond the congregation. He is captivated and moved by the stories of Queer people, how they grew up, and if they came out, how and when. How did the rest of their family relate to them? He has observed that Queer people don't often hear stories about themselves. He has set out to change that, and he is especially keen to learn about queerness in Midwestern families.

Paul's mission, as he notes on his website (paulwkruse.com), is to "tell Queer love stories." Many LGBTQ+ people feel they must leave their families of origin and the small towns that raised them in order to be who they are without judgment, recrimination, and the need to shroud themselves in secrecy. Others have discovered this freedom may actually exist in those places after all. "Love is Love," as the saying goes. These Queer love stories that Paul wants to tell are not limited to romantic love. The type of love that sustains us can be found or re-discovered in all



Paul Kruse, Artist in Residence

sorts of places — even in small-town America, and even or especially in the lap of one's own family.

During his residency at Unity, Paul will conduct interviews, lead Wellspring Wednesday sessions, and present a listening gathering and celebration in March to culminate his work with us. Not only do we hope all community members will introduce themselves and make him feel welcome, but we invite everyone to engage in Paul's work on a deeper level.

While his project, "Once Removed," focuses on the lives of LGBTQ+ people, there will be opportunities for all of us to participate. Paul's Wellspring Wednesday sessions will provide a glimpse into his creative process, and he will share some effective approaches to having meaningful and sometimes difficult conversations with family members, others we care about, and even strangers. The culminating listening session will be a chance to celebrate our connection to one another.

{continued on page 10}

Approaching the Challenge of Reparations

Pauline Eichten, with input from the Beloved Community Staff Team



It's timely to have this article in December, when our worship theme is wonder. How might we wonder together, with curiosity instead of judgment, about the challenge of reparations? Are we making any progress toward racial justice, as an interviewer wondered in March of 1964, when he asked Malcolm X if progress was being made.

"No, no," Malcolm replied. "I will never say that progress is being made. If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there's no progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. The progress is healing the wound that the blow made. And they haven't even begun to pull the knife out, much less heal the wound." And when the interviewer attempted to ask another question, Malcolm interjected, "They won't even admit the knife is there."

"Pulling the knife out" is an essential step, but it is only an act of suspending the harm. It does not "heal the wound" because it is not an act of remediation or reparation. Repairing the wound requires those culpable to make amends and restitution for the harm inflicted. The claim for restitution anchors historically on our government's failure to deliver on the promised 40-acre land grants to the newly emancipated, a failure that lay the foundation for the enormous wealth gap that exists today between Black and white people.

The case for reparations does not center exclusively on "slavery reparation" but seeks accountability for the atrocities of legal segregation we know as the Jim Crow era and the ongoing atrocities, including mass incarceration, credit/housing/employment discrimination, a criminal justice system and policing that continue to kill unarmed Black people. It includes the immense wealth disparity borne by Black American descendants, the cumulative legacy



Photo by Fibonacci Blue, Creative Commons

of our nation's trajectory of racial injustice. Reparations is about repairing the wound, both acknowledging the moral failing and making restitution for lives robbed. Reparations ultimately aspires to the righting of a wronged relationship and the deep spiritual yearning for reconciliation.

When asked "Why reparations?" several members of the BCST responded with these statements.

"To right a wrong ... make us all more whole ... to foster healing."

"[Any] money given would be the proverbial drop in the bucket of righting wrongs. [T]he preparation for and the practice of engaging in reparations is, in itself, useful as a spiritual practice."

"When you inherit good from wrong, you're responsible for reparations to repair the wrong."

"Reparations of any kind should be significant, sacrificial and anonymous. Anything short of that feels like tokenism."

Unity Church has been on a 20-year journey to becoming an actively antiracist multicultural community.

We continue to learn about the history of this country and its development and economic power built on the exploitation of African Americans and the appropriation of land from Native Americans. And we are aware of the current disparities in education, wealth, health and safety experienced by Black, Indigenous and People of Color that are an outgrowth of those foundational practices of exploitation.

The more we learn about the history of mistreatment of Black and Native Americans, and the continuing effect of that mistreatment into the present, the more it seems clear that some form of restitution must be made. Kevin Shird, in a recent column in the Pioneer Press (bit.ly/shirdreparations), says compensation today for historic injustices would be a major step forward. However, beyond any monetary compensation, he stated that just the acknowledgement of the injustices committed against Black and Indigenous people matters.

The need for reparations or restitution is clear. What gets complicated is how to do it and who is responsible.

{continued on page 10}



DECEMBER HOLIDAY SERVICES AND EVENTS



Blue Holidays Service

Wednesday, December 14 • 7:00 p.m. • Ames Chapel

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

Music Ministry Holiday Concert

Saturday, December 17 • Sanctuary

6:30 p.m.: Carol Sing

7:00 p.m.: Concert • Children's Choir, Youth Choir, Unity Choir, Unity Singers, Women's Ensemble

8:00 p.m.: Potluck Dessert Buffet • Bring a holiday dessert to share!

Everyone's Nativity • Family Sunday

Sunday, December 18 • In-person services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Carol Sing at 9:00 a.m., Carol Shout at 11:00 a.m.

Livestream: youtu.be/DxKsZzKWXo0

Have you ever wondered what would happen if we treated every birth as though it were the birth of a savior? What might the world be like if we claimed our own and each other's divine spark in the celebration of each new life?

Be Still and Know

Saturday, December 24 • 10:00 a.m. • 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.

Christmas Pageant

Saturday, December 24 • 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. • Sanctuary

After a two year pandemic hiatus, we are excited to invite families back to participate in Unity's Christmas pageant. Whether you are new to our pageant, or you have been part of it for years, we look forward to gathering again in the Sanctuary on Christmas Eve. Details including registration for pageant cast and children's choir are online at unityunitarian.org/pageant.html. Questions? Please reach out to our director, Kelley Loughrey, at kelleyloughrey@comcast.net. If you would like to sing in the adult pageant choir (rehearsal is Sunday, December 18, 10:15 a.m., Choir Room), please email ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

Family Lessons and Carols

Saturday, December 24 • 8:00 p.m.

In-person in the Sanctuary and via livestream: youtu.be/bezT73Fs29o

A time of lessons and carols, hearing the familiar Christmas story, singing, and lighting our candles against the night. Join us one and all for this special evening of memory and hope. If you would like to sing with the candlelight choir (rehearsal is Thursday, December 22, 7:30 p.m., Parish Hall), please email ahmed@unityunitarian.org.

Small Wonders

Sunday, December 25 • 10:00 a.m.

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

In-person in the Sanctuary. This service will not be livestreamed.

A simple service of poetry, song, silence and sharing – about the wonders in your life, both great and small.

El Mesías

December 9-11 • Details on page 15 and online at

minnesotaorchestra.org

Ahmed Anzaldúa will lead Border CrosSing and the Minnesota Orchestra in a one-of-a-kind bilingual program that blends portions of Messiah sung in both English and Spanish with all six movements of Navidad Nuestra, a Christmas cantata by Argentinian composer Ariel Ramírez.

Mitten Tree

Decorate our mitten tree (located on the lower level, Whitman Lobby) 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.

Holiday Boutique

Sunday, December 4 and 11

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. On sale Sunday morning, December 4.

Santa Pause

Wednesday, December 7

5:30-8:30 p.m. • Lower Level

Sign your child/ren up for three hours of free holiday fun at church. Details on page 14.

Holiday Caroling!

Meet on Sunday, December 11, at 1:00 p.m., in the Parish Hall meet at 1:00 p.m. We will visit various senior residences where church members live.

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY / SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

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

5:45 p.m.: Dinner is \$8/adult, \$4/child, \$20 max/family (financial support is available by email to laura@unityunitarian.org).

6:40 p.m.: Multigenerational chapel service in the Ames Chapel

7:10-8:30 p.m.: Programs with childcare provided.

December 7

Dinner: Tater tot hotdish, salad, dessert

The Role of Religion: Colonization, Missionary Work, Boarding Schools

In-person in the Parish Hall and Online via Zoom

Registration: bit.ly/justiceseriethree

As we continue the process of telling the truth and taking responsibility for our part in historical injustice and the complicity that continues into the present, Part 3 of our seven-part monthly series on Truth Telling and Healing will focus on the Role of Religion: Colonization, Missionary Work and Boarding Schools. Dr. Samuel Torres, Deputy CEO of the Native American Boarding Schools Healing Coalition will discuss the history of Indian boarding schools and their impact today, considering what we can do and what is being done.

Seven Perspectives on Homelessness in Saint Paul

In-person in the Robbins Parlor

Representatives from seven parts of the Saint Paul service system will discuss their perspectives on homelessness. Each representative will talk about how they come into contact with people experiencing homelessness, what they have learned, and what they think will need to happen to address homelessness. They will also talk about their warming center initiative, a new place for people to go on winter nights if they have nowhere else to go. Come ask the questions you've been afraid to ask about the culture of homelessness and where we all fit in the big picture of advocacy and compassion. You can even sign up to volunteer!

Religious Education New Family Orientation

Gannett Room

Are you a new or visiting family interested in learning more about Unity's religious education programs? Religious Education New Family Orientation is offered the first Wednesday of every month at 7:15 p.m. RSVP required, one week in advance, by email to Ray at ray@unityunitarian.org.

There is no Beginner Violin n December 7.

See you in 2023!

After December 7, Wellspring Wednesday goes on winter break and returns January 4, 2023. Here's a preview of what's to come!

Beginner violin will continue each week in the Choir Room. Lectio Divina will be held on the second Wednesday via Zoom. Fun and games will continue with Board Game Night in the Center Room on the third Wednesday.

January 4: Multigenerational Movie Night. Send movie suggestions to madeline@unityunitarian.org.

Conversation with Senator John Marty about his proposed gun safety legislation. Sponsored by our Gun Sense Community Outreach Ministry Team.

January 11: Indigenous Healing Through Language, Culture and Spirituality

January 18: Conversation with Artist-in-Residence Paul Kruse

January 25: Unity's History Teaching Team will present on Unity Church in WWI

A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul: Lectio Divina



Second Wednesday (December 14)

Fourth Tuesday (December 27)

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Online via Zoom, register:

bit.ly/lectio22-23

Meet online to share in our ongoing offering of Lectio Divina. Following a centuries-old Benedictine spiritual practice of contemplative reading, a chosen poem is read aloud, as attendees are encouraged to lift up what they heard and how the poem spoke to them. A different poem at each session. A rich way to receive poetry's gifts in a small group setting. Led by Lisa Wersal or Shelley Butler.

Mindful Self-Compassion

Monday, January 9 • 6:30-8:00 p.m. • Foote Room

Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) is a mindfulness-based, skills-training program that enables us to meet a range of difficult emotions, including self-criticism and shame, with a kind and loving heart. This in-person introduction to Mindful Self-Compassion will involve a brief presentation and an opportunity to learn a core MSC practice. Information about MSC programs, both in-person and online, will also be available. All are welcome, and meditation experience is not required to participate. To register for this free offering, please contact Jenny at jennywilson1@yahoo.com.

Jenny Wilson, MSW, LICSW is a psychotherapist and MSC trained teacher. She has a private practice in Saint Paul and has been a member of Unity Church for over 25 years.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE / BCST / PARISH HALL ARTIST

Artist in Residence Paul Kruse, continued from page 6

We are not all the same but our differences do not have to separate us. By sharing our stories, we break the silence that isolates. This is work that asks us to further develop our "going deep quickly" practice, one of the personal spiritual practices referred to in Unity's Double Helix Model of faith formation and antiracist multiculturalism.

The intention of Unity's Artist in Residence program is to "activate our imagination, foster relationships among and beyond our church walls, inspire spiritual and emotional growth, and open the church community to larger dimensions in the work of making cultural change." We believe that Paul's residency and that of our other artist residencies, helps to advance Unity's vision of becoming an antiracist multicultural Beloved Community.

Learn more about Unity's Artist in Residence program on the website under "Grow," here: unityunitarian.org/artist-in-residence.html.

Approaching the Challenge of Reparations, continued from page 7

House Resolution H.R.- 40, named after the 40 acres and a mule promised to enslaved people after emancipation, but never given, is a bill seeking to establish a federal commission to examine the impacts of the legacy of slavery and recommend proposals to provide reparations. The bill does not authorize payments; it creates a commission to study the problem and recommend solutions. Representative John Conyers, Jr., of Michigan introduced the bill every year starting in 1989. After he retired in 2017 at age 88, Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, a Democrat from Texas, assumed the role of first sponsor of the bill. 2021 was the first year the bill made it out of committee.

Locally, the St. Paul City Council established the Reparations Legislative Advisory Committee in June 2021 to lay the groundwork for the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission. The Commission will develop recommendations to "specifically address the creation of generational wealth for the American Descendants of Chattel Slavery and to boost economic mobility and opportunity in the Black community." The ordinance to create the reparations commission will be coming before the council yet this year, after which it will be Mayor Carter who appoints the commission members. It is hoped that he will do that after the first of the year.

And the issue of broken treaties and restoring Native lands is a particular form of reparations that needs to be addressed. As members of the BCST seek to expand and deepen conversations about Unity's role in reparations, watch for future articles that dig into these and other efforts addressing reparations and how this congregation might contribute.

The Beloved Community Staff Team is KP Hong, Barbara Hubbard, Kathleen Rolenz, Karen Gustafson, Drew Danielson, Laura Park, Angela Wilcox, Erika Sanders and Pauline Eichten.

Available in Unity's Library

The Color of Wealth: The Story Behind the U.S. Racial Wealth Divide
Barbara Robles, Betsy Leonard-Wright, Rose Brewer, 2006 • bit.ly/colorofwealth

The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America, Richard Rothstein, 2017 • bit.ly/coloroflaw1

Available Online

"The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic* magazine, Ta-Nehisi Coates, 2014
bit.ly/case4reparations1

Truth Telling and Healing: Indigenous and Environmental Justice Series
unityunitarian.org/indigenous-justice.html

December Parish Hall Artist

Dan Petrov

Born in Serbia, Dan Petrov spent most of his University summers in northern Italy studying painting techniques of Renaissance and contemporary painters. After University his museum studies extended to France, England and Holland where he copied old masters. Combining indirect and direct painting methods Dan arrived at the techniques he uses today in still life, landscape, portrait and figure. His studies of visual art continued in Canada from 1992 to 2006 where he was associated with Studio of Sergio DePaoli. In 2006 Dan relocated his studio to Minneapolis, Minnesota. From 2006 to 2010 Dan was the part of The Atelier comprehensive studio art program of Richard Lack.

Dan teaches Renaissance and Flemish Oil Painting Method, courses in Alla Prima Method and workshops in oil painting of different genres for beginners, intermediate and advanced students. Dan lives and paints in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



LIBRARY-BOOKSTALL / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS



Some New, Some Faithful, Some Once-in-a-While Contributors Have Done it Again!

Cairns Vol. 14, 2022 — Coming Out in December
Shelley Butler, Co-Editor of *Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts*

I told a *Cairns* reader recently that this new 2022 issue is really good, to which one of the *Cairns* staff said, “Well, what is she going to say?” OK, so I am hopelessly, shamelessly biased but the beautiful, engaging art and lit that is submitted never ceases to amaze me, and this year is no exception. Inside the beautifully designed cover featuring an original Maura Williams painting from her “World Turned Upside Down” series are seventy-some works by over forty contributors. To quote Rob Eller-Isaacs after admiring the new issue one year, “What a church, eh?” Indeed.

Not to give too much away, but here is a sneak peek at some of what you’ll find in *Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts*, Vol. 14, 2022.

Editor Lisa Burke reminds us in the foreword that, “We need both art and literature in our lives. We always have; but at times like these, as we face an uncertain future in our congregation, in our nation, and in the world at large, art and literature become a way to process and understand what is happening to us individually and as a community, to foster gratitude, and to imagine what is possible.”

Have you ever seen a real live Whirling Dervish chasing away evil spirits? I know I haven’t, but Sharon Merritt has and tells us about it in a beautifully written piece about growing up in Morocco.



Dick Buggs models for us what activism looks like — a personal, sometimes painful, mostly joyful journey from Anita Bryant to the passing of Freedom to Marry.

Are you tempted yet? I hope so. Happy viewing and reading!

For more issues of *Cairns*, visit the Unity Bookstall or the Unity Anderson Library on Sunday mornings. Browse the library catalog at librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch.

In The Justice Database: Girl Trek

Girl Trek is the largest health movement for Black Women, impacting over a million women with effective public health interventions. bit.ly/JusticeData

Fellowship Groups

For more conversation about getting connected, contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Afterthoughts offers time immediately following the 9:00 service to discuss the service.

Caregivers Group meets on the third Thursday of the month.

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

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Kung Fu meets Saturday mornings, 9:00-10:00 a.m., online via Zoom. Email Barney Kujawski at barney.kujawski@gmail.com to receive the link.

Living With Grief Group meets on the third Tuesday of the month.

Men's Breakfast Group meets monthly on the first Saturday for breakfast from 8:30-10:00 a.m.

Men's Coffee Group meets every other Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. for light-hearted conversation.

Men's Conversation Group meets Monday, December 12 and 26, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, December 5 and 19, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

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

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

Textile Arts Group meets online the first and third Wednesday of each month from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, etc.

Unity Book Club meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. December 13: Title TBA.

Women in Retirement meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, from 1:00-3:00 p.m., in the Center Room. Social hour at noon!

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35) is a fun, reflective group of people working to build multi-faith and multi-cultural community. They come together to ask the questions that are consuming us, to practice sharing what is sacred, and to try to live consequential lives as we navigate the complexity of being an adult. All are welcome. To be added to the Young Adults email list, please email kp@unityunitarian.org.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Evergreen Quilters

Gather the Stars

The Evergreen Quilters are raffling off a quilt entitled “Gather the Stars” which is dedicated in memory of Martha Eaves, a founder of the Evergreen Quilters. “Gather the Stars” by Carl Sandburg was read at Martha’s Celebration of Life service.

The quilt was lovingly designed, machine pieced and quilted by the Evergreen Quilters. The quilt is queen size (80x96”). Raffle tickets will be sold at church on Sunday, December 4 and 11. You may also purchase raffle tickets any time from members of the Evergreen Quilters. Tickets are just \$2.00 each and all the money supports non-profits serving families in our community. The drawing will be held December 11 at 12:30 p.m. and you need not be present to win. Thank you for your support!

Donate to the Food Shelf

During the month of October we donated 258 pounds of food to Hallie Q. Brown. Please continue to bring corn bread mix, canned corn, canned green beans, cake mix, frosting, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie filling and other holiday foods. They will also accept pet food. If you would like to donate money to purchase ham, turkey, or other perishable food items please visit hallieqbrown.org.



Evergreen Quilters and Mano a Mano

Holiday Boutique

Sunday, December 4 and 11 • 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.

Affordable Housing Team

Warming Hubs Assist Full Shelters

As temperatures drop, the need to help unsheltered individuals and families increases. For those unable to access shelters, Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul have secured two buildings (within parks) to be used as warming hubs from December 1-March 1, 10:00 p.m.-6:30 a.m.

This pilot project needs volunteers to hand out warm beverages, clean dry socks, and hats and gloves. Each location will have a trained staff person on-site as well as an on-call supervisor to troubleshoot. Each evening, a transportation loop will begin at area shelters, making sure to find anyone who was unable to gain access and get them to a warming hub.

A recorded training is available for each volunteer. To request the recording, ask questions and/or volunteer, please contact Justine Nelson at justine.nelson@state.mn.us and Janice Gestner at janicemgg@comcast.net.

Racial and Restorative Justice Team

Prison Ministry: Send Holiday Messages

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) is organizing volunteers to send holiday messages to each of their members currently experiencing incarceration. The goal is to send three messages to each of their 1,638 members. That's 4,914 pieces of mail which means lots of volunteers are needed! For more information, including a sign-up sheet for messages, visit bit.ly/holidaygreetingsclf.

In addition to sending holiday messages, the CLF hopes to add to their team of free-world pen pals. The Worthy Now Prison Network staff matches CLF members who are incarcerated with UUs who live in the free world. For a minimum of six months, you will exchange friendly letters on topics of mutual interest. Details are available at worthynow.org/pen-pals.

Gun Sense Team

Join Our Work for Sensible Gun Laws

In Minnesota, responsibility for moving our state forward on the gun safety front lies at the feet and on the desks of the House and Senate Democratic majorities. It is a time to look carefully at the essence of what gun safety in our state really means, and to press for commonsense laws that will make the lives of police officers, school children — indeed, *all of us* — safer. Unity's Gun Sense Team will be looking at the bills before our lawmakers, and educating ourselves on the best ways to make our voices and choices heard at the Capitol. Watch for our informational table in the Parish Hall, especially during the upcoming legislative session starting in January. If you would like to be on the Gun Sense email list, or join us in our work, please email Richard Birger at rmbirger@yahoo.com. Have a safe and happy New Year!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Act for the Earth and Indigenous Justice Teams

Truth Telling and Healing:
Indigenous and Environmental Justice Series

The Role of Religion: Colonization, Missionary Work, Boarding Schools

Wednesday, December 7 • 7:00 p.m.
Parish Hall and online via Zoom
Registration: bit.ly/justiceseriethree

Part 3

From Unity's land acknowledgement: *We acknowledge the ongoing injustices that we have committed against the Dakota and Ojibwe nations, and we wish to interrupt this legacy, beginning with acts of healing and honest storytelling about this place.*

As we continue the process of telling the truth and taking responsibility for our part in historical injustice and the complicity that continues into the present, Part 3 of our seven-part monthly series on Truth Telling and Healing will focus on the impact of missionary work, colonization, and boarding schools on the lives of Indigenous people in Minnesota. Dr. Samuel Torres (he/him) of the Native American Boarding Schools Healing Coalition will discuss the history of Indian boarding schools and their impact today, considering what we can do and what is being done.

Dr. Torres is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for NABS and has been a fundamental part of the team since 2019. Dr. Torres first joined NABS as the Director of Research and Programs where his contributions have included leading research teams through several projects such as the Indian Child Removal Study with the First Nations Repatriation Institute and the University of Minnesota, as well as the development of Indian boarding school research and coordinating with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. Samuel has a doctorate in Educational Leadership for Social Justice from Loyola Marymount University and his work encompasses the impacts of colonization on historical and contemporary education methods, particularly the legacy of boarding schools. With his extensive experience Dr. Torres holds a deep passion for decolonizing fixed knowledge systems, centering ancestral knowledge and histories, and working in community to promote Indigenous futures. A bicultural human being, Samuel Torres is Mexica/Nahua on his father's side, and Irish/Scottish from his mother. In addition to actively learning and practicing Nahua language, traditions, and ceremony, he belongs to the Mexica kinship community, Kalpulli Yaocenoxtli, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Save the date for part 4 of this series!

Indigenous Healing Through Language,
Culture, and Spirituality
Wednesday, January 11 • 7:00 p.m.

Part 4

Act for the Earth Team

When There Is No Perfect Answer

Anna Newton, Act for the Earth Team

Do you notice more plastic in your garbage than you used to? Plastic is hard to avoid and turns out to be a lot harder to eliminate than I expected. Adopting reusable bags and refillable water bottles is an easy first step. But after that it gets complicated, even many of our reusable bags are made of ... plastic. We may decry the use of disposable diapers, yet conventional cotton growers use pesticide heavily and organic cotton is prohibitively expensive. Washing cloth diapers also requires precious water and power to heat it. Can we justify paying twice as much for milk in returnable glass bottles? *Is it even fair that we have the means to make that choice, when many families struggle with rising food costs?* Sometimes it seems we take two steps forward and one back.



Is it even possible to eliminate plastic? Mary Kosuth, in her excellent presentation, *The Immortal Plastic Bottle* (youtu.be/k7zdiVBd4wE), asked us to think of a plastic product we could not live without. What would your answer be? Mine is very personal, for I have five stents in my heart without which I might literally not be alive today. I am grateful every time I head outdoors to hike or birdwatch, or to be a part of my grandkids' lives. However, the cardiac procedure that placed those stents required the use of medical equipment containing quite a bit of plastic that was only used once and then thrown away. I would rather not beat myself up about that one.

Amidst this ambiguity, a few things are clear to me:

- **Reduce is the first R.** Rethink consumption habits. Buy less. Look for products with less/no plastic packaging. Unity's Act for the Earth team has suggestions to help: unityunitarian.org/plastic-crisis-challenge.html
- **Collective action magnifies individual acts.** If I stop buying jugs of laundry detergent, my few are kept out of the waste stream, but if my community stops, hundreds are kept out.
- **Talking about it matters!** People are looking for alternatives, so talk about what you are doing at the dinner table, with friends and neighbors, and at work.
- **Seek systemic change.** Encourage legislators to support an Extended Producer Responsibility bill for Minnesota.

Uncertainty can immobilize us. "Don't let perfect be the enemy of good" is good advice here. We must let corporations know we want less plastic packaging (and support them when they respond). Minnesota retailers are already offering more items in creative cardboard packages. The journey to a lower environmental footprint is long. We may stumble, but we do our best. And we can hold each other up along the way.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Most Wonderful Time

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

I am a no apologies “believer” and pushover about the holiday season. I am a grateful sap from late November through early January. *The Grinch* and *A Christmas Carol* are my true “Bible” texts. It is the most wonderful time of the year. If compelled to explain myself and my annual unflagging optimism for this season of Joy, my oft-repeated line is, “It’s one time when seemingly all of us willingly leave ourselves open to the possibility of magic, eagerly drinking the “milk of human kindness.”

For some this sounds like treacly sentimentalism. It no doubt is. Doesn’t change my stance — it is a season when many, many people celebrate our capacity to wonder, and that capacity can embrace it all, the nostalgic, the commercial, love for all and the communal good, the deeply spiritual and the candy floss. We stand before sparkling trees and starry nights, with music and celebration and caring for one another and begging for gifts and sharing of stories. All with a deep well of wonder.

I do know with 100% certainty that I feel my absolute best when I am openly, actively in wonder. It does my mind and body and soul vast good to be swept up in wonder about how, and what if, and how much, and quite possibly. The expansiveness it allows causes me to reach out with my heart and my hands. It opens me up!

Years ago I fell in love with the Meyers-Briggs instrument and embraced my INFP profile — writerly, romantic, prone to melancholy, often inward focused. I feel completely defined and sometimes imprisoned by my “P” axis, the one that says I cannot be comfortable with final conclusions, that I want possibilities over clarity. I can be terrible to live or work with if you’re looking for a firm decision. But it also speaks to a desire to hold out for what could be, for a chance to go in a completely different direction if the reasons are compelling, to throw out whatever criteria I was using before if there is a new and better way to look at and understand things.

I absolutely hate the idea that wonder belongs primarily to the young or immature of mind. Yet I recognize the erosion of my wonder skills as I get older. I wonder if it’s unavoidable. Or how much is it a sign of our times that wonder is too often deemed unnecessary? We can look up the “answer” in a heartbeat, we can know all we need to know about another way of thinking or being, just by checking our social media and news feeds.

I say we resist any pull away from wonder, drink the eggnog (is this like, a raw egg?), and follow the lead of the young and young of heart. Invite the unknown and the possible to our circles with faith that (apologies for pulling this out every single year)...

Christmas Day will always be just as long as we have we.

Welcome Christmas while we stand, heart to heart and hand in hand.

2023 Youth Musical

*Ready to reveal your fun socks?
Wondering what Cluck the Chicken
is up to? Join the fun!*

Unity's Youth Musical is a unique production created each year for Unity Church by Mary Blouin Auffert and Sandy Waterman.

All youth in grades 6, 7, and 8 are invited to participate, and everyone who auditions will get a part.

It is strongly recommended that participants be up to date on COVID vaccinations.

All volunteers (grade 6 and up) are welcome to help out with staging, costumes, technical help, and marketing. For high schoolers, this can count towards service hours.

Informational Parent Meeting

Sunday, December 4, 10:15 a.m., Center Room. Meet the co-producers, ask questions, learn about the musical.

Auditions and Parent Meeting

Auditions will be held Tuesday, January 10, from 6:30-9:00 p.m., in the Foote Room. A mandatory parent/guardian meeting will be held in the Center Room during the same time as auditions. At this meeting you will learn more about the production and sign up to volunteer.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals begin January 12 and are held Sunday afternoons, 1:30-3:30 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 7:00-8:30 p.m., at Unity Church.

Tech Week

March 5–8

Performances

March 9, 10, 11

Questions? Ask a co-producer!

Gabby Mead:

gabrielledmead@gmail.com

Jennifer Harrington:

jenaharrington@gmail.com

Theresa Nelson:

theresanelson820@gmail.com

Santa Pause

Wednesday, December 7 • 5:30-8:30 p.m. • Lower Level

Sign up your child/ren for three hours of free holiday fun 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 provided. RSVP by Monday, December 5: unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.html. Seeking volunteers age 11 and up. With questions or to volunteer, contact Katrina at katrina@unityunitarian.org.

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

In December I will have the privilege of conducting the Minnesota Orchestra and Border

CrosSing on a program we've named "El Mesías," a mash-up of Handel's Messiah and Ramirez's Navidad Nuestra. The choirs at Unity Church will also be presenting Navidad Nuestra for their winter concert and at some of the services in December.

Although George Frideric Handel's Messiah was originally meant for Easter, today it is a fixture of the Christmas season. It is presented countless times in the U.S. and U.K. around the holiday, and sales and web downloads of recordings of Messiah peak around this time. For many choristers, Christmas concerts of Messiah and sing-a-longs are the high point of the year. Ariel Ramirez's Navidad Nuestra occupies a similar role in much of the Spanish-speaking world, especially in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. In this program, we bring both works together. I've translated large portions of Messiah into Spanish, presenting it in a bilingual version that switches constantly from one language to the other. This makes it more relevant to listener like me, accustomed to a borderland between languages and cultures, where we switch effortlessly between Spanish and English in our daily lives, and makes the text more immediately accessible to Spanish speakers in the audience (approximately 40% of our Border CrosSing audience self-identifies as Latinx and about 20% speaks Spanish as a first language). The added benefit is that listeners that have heard Messiah countless times before find that the use of a new language highlights elements in the music that they may not have ever noticed. This is the ideal for many performers, the challenge is presenting this work so that the listener hears it as if for the first time. The translations

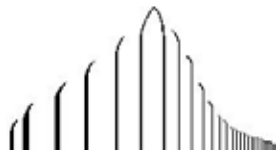
always match with a corresponding biblical text, and have been based on various Spanish editions of the Bible, including various editions of the Reina Valera, Biblia Latinoamericana, Dios Habla Hoy, Nueva Biblia Española, and La Biblia de Nuestro Pueblo.

The movements of the Navidad Nuestra cantata are interwoven into Handel's oratorio to create a composite work that tells complimentary narratives of the Nativity, one taking place in the past and told in the form of the Biblical prophecy used in Messiah, and one taking place in the present told through the poetry of Félix Luna which transports the Nativity story to a South American setting. Navidad Nuestra was chosen because this work highlights the role of the Holy Family as refugees, connecting to the current refugee crisis that is brewing throughout Latin America. The choice of this work is partly in response to current actions by the U.S. government regarding the mistreatment of Central American refugees at the southern border, the illegal denial of the right for these people to claim asylum, the separation of children from their parents and their detention in prison-like facilities, and the extensive media sensationalization of a "caravan" of immigrants from Central America heading towards the U.S. that was highly politicized in the 2018 midterm elections. Last year this connection was especially relevant the night of the first concert, which coincided with the death of a seven-year-old child in the custody of the U.S. Border Patrol, an event that was in many of our minds as we performed the final movement of Navidad Nuestra, "La huida." While two movements in Navidad Nuestra explicitly speak of the Holy Family as refugees, in "La peregrinación" (The Pilgrimage) and "La huida" (The Flight), the pairing of this work with Messiah highlights passages in Handel's work which also connect to related ideas, such as "the desert," "the wilderness,"

or "walking in the darkness." The expanded context creates new meaning that can help make this work relevant to a wider audience.

I've taken this opportunity to remove some antisemitic undertones in Messiah's original text by replacing those passages with a Spanish translation that does not reflect these, such as in the movement "The people that walked in darkness." Seeing as how the simultaneous use of two languages helped refresh Messiah for those listeners that were already familiar with the work, I've extended this concept to integrate a different musical language into Messiah. To do this, we've added flourishes from the traditional Andean instruments used in Navidad Nuestra to Messiah to give the work a slightly different sound. New instrumentation helps broaden the sound world to create a more unified listening experience that brings both works together in a more organic manner. In most choruses and some arias the accordion is used as a continuous instrument, together with the harpsichord. The charangos and guitars are added to the codas of choruses such as "And the Glory," "His Yoke Is Easy," and "Hallelujah." Zampoñas, accordion, and percussion are also added to accompanied recitatives and to some instrumental passages. We are using harpsichord and violin for various introductions to movements from Navidad Nuestra to create musical bridges to connect both works without interruption. One of the most positive aspects of how this program has been received is the organic way in which both works were connected, both musically and in their narratives.

Unity Church is a congregation that revels in its Christmas traditions. This program is a celebration of the holidays, while also asking "whose Christmas are we celebrating?" I am looking forward to sharing this program with our community both at Unity and beyond!



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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

REV. KP HONG, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
BARBARA HUBBARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REV. KATHLEEN ROLENZ, INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER
LOUISE LIVESAY-AL, CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES MN
PERMIT NO. 1141

**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Unity's Christmas Pageant Returns



Christmas Eve • 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. • Sanctuary • Details on page 8

2023 Unity Church Youth Musical

All 6th, 7th, and 8th graders are welcome to participate!
Details on page 14.



Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts

Cairns Vol. 14, 2022 — *Coming Out in December*

Turn to page 11 for details.



Paul Kruse: Unity's Next Artist in Residence

Turn to page 6 to learn more.

Beloved Community Staff Team

Turn to page 7 for *Approaching the Challenge of Reparations*.

Take the Plastics Crisis Challenge

Details on page 13.

