

Break Open

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

I remember sitting in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Bryan Hospital, eight years ago this week. Our daughter Ailish had been born almost six weeks early, on December 28, and as the new year of 2018 dawned, she was no longer in any real danger but needed a few more days to "bake" before going home. I remember knowing, at my core, that this was a dividing line in my life: that there would be the time before we knew where the NICU bathrooms were, and the time after. A time before our family had this new life in it, and the time after, shared with our daughter. There was no going back to quiet nights without commitments, joking that I seemed unable to keep a houseplant alive. In this new time, there would never not be this tiny but weighty responsibility, this new life who my life would quickly orient around, and orbit for the next eighteen to sixty-five years or so.

Change is fundamental to life. Sometimes we choose it, in getting married, or having children, or taking on a new role or job. Sometimes it happens without our input or choice, when loved ones die, our bodies age and change, or someone we count on comes up short. Sometimes change happens in a single, sharp moment that breaks us open like I was in the hospital eight years ago. And sometimes we are broken open not by a single moment, but by a slow accretion of small changes over time until we look back and realize that we are fundamentally different than we once were. The question for us is not

whether we will change and be broken open in life, but how we will respond.

This can be a place and a role for church in our lives: giving us community and language for moments of transformation. This is a place where we gather with each other, as we each grapple with what it means to be alive and to know the reality of change. It is a place where we ask hard, big questions, and sometimes sit with the discomfort of not having a clear answer. Church can be a place of mentorship where others have gone through similar moments. The morning after Ailish was born Fritz Hudson, the minister emeritus of the Lincoln, Nebraska, congregation I was serving, showed up at the hospital asking whether *I* needed a minister to talk to (yes, of course I did).

Sometimes churches are not just a place to hold us and mentor us through moments of great change, or breaking open, but they are the catalyst for that breaking open. I have lost count of the number of times members of Unitarian Universalist congregations tell me, about their first few months attending, "I kept coming to worship and just cried in the pew on Sunday morning." This was also part of my story, finding in the hymns that we sing permission to feel both broken-hearted and recommitted to the world as we sang, "We'll build a land where we bind up the broken/we'll build the promised land that can be."

Part of the shock of breaking open is that it is, almost always, unexpected. I could know, for seven and a half

months, that Stacie and I were going to have a child. But I was entirely unprepared for what that would mean for us when it actually happened. The specifics of transformation are often like this: even as we expect some kind of change, we don't know the details until they have already happened.

But even with the details unknown, we can cultivate an orientation to transformation, a faith that leans into the reality of change and embraces the challenge and opportunity of breaking open. We can learn to hold what has come before loosely, honoring it without being tied to it, and be curious about what comes next.

The world will break us open, we cannot choose otherwise, no matter how much we want to. We can choose how we respond.

*Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair
On behalf of the Theme Team*

Theme Resources

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



Just Words

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, Senior Minister

January is a time of new beginnings, and for me, it feels like the beginning of a different chapter in shared ministry at Unity Church. When I started in August 2024, we had three large questions to resolve:

- What would be the nature of Unity's new ends statements?
- How could we stabilize the position of Minister of Congregational Care?
- How would we compensate our staff according to UUA guidelines?

Over the last year and a half, these questions have been resolved. Unity's Board of Trustees developed a set of ends statements last May, that have been guiding our work this fall. We are now two budget cycles into a new staff compensation structure. In December, we hired Rev. Shay MacKay as Unity's Minister of Congregational Care. All three developments have been exciting to be a part of, and along with a sense of getting to know the congregation and the people in it, I am starting to feel the pull of the next set of questions:

- How will we live into Unity's new ends statements over the next five years?
- Who can we partner with in that work?
- What will be the adjustments in the system of the church to a new staff and ministry structure?

The last question is one that has started to emerge over the last six months. I am not Rob and Janne Eller-Issacs: there is only one of me, and at this point in my life I have a young child at home and a spouse with an active professional life outside of Unity Church. This is obvious and not a bad thing! It does mean that I am often juggling more commitments outside of the church than they were. One of the practical outcomes of this is that my email inbox and schedule have often become overloaded in the last year, as I try to keep up with both existing commitments and new requests.

Because of that, this winter I hired a remote executive assistant to help me juggle my schedule, inbox, and to-do list. Brooke Grossman (brooke@unityunitarian.org) has already started to work to organize my correspondence, and going forward in the new year will be managing my schedule. If you want to set up time to meet with me, please email her! She can see my whole schedule and is more flexible than the built-in Outlook tool I used for much of last year, with mixed success.

I am excited about what this new year holds for us at Unity Church. From where I sit, we are shifting into a new period of our shared ministry, no longer defined by getting to know each other, but instead asking, "Okay, now what will we do with the team we have in place." I look forward to seeing where that question leads.

2

Integrity, service, and joy.

Unity's Minister of Congregational Care

A Note from Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, on behalf of the Unity Church Executive Team

Many of you saw in last month's newsletter that Rev. Shay MacKay asked to be considered for the permanent role as Unity's Minister of Congregational Care. We are delighted to announce that on December 11, Unity's Executive Team offered her the position, and she accepted! Rev. Shay brings compassion, wisdom, a deep commitment to presence, and no little joy to her work. It has been one of the highlights of this fall to begin to work with her and get to know her in this role at Unity, and we are so excited to see what will come of this shared ministry in the years to come. This spring, we will have some intentional programming to begin to envision what Unity's Congregational Care ministry will look like as we stabilize staffing and move into a shared future with Rev. Shay. Please join us in welcoming Shay, and in imagining what we will build together!

A Note from Rev. Shay MacKay, Minister of Congregational Care



Often, when someone asks me about my path to ministry, I talk about surrender — surrendering to the opportunities that have appeared in my life. And by surrender, I don't mean giving up my agency, but rather employing it wholeheartedly; I do the work of preparation so that when coincidence and synchronicity present an exciting adventure I'm ready to jump right in.

I've spent the ten years since my internship at Unity learning, exploring, evolving, grieving, and celebrating. When the gift of being able to be back here with you presented itself, I was ready to say yes — yes to deepening in relationship and commitment with you, yes to learning where needs are greatest and how my gifts and passions can meet you there, and yes to ministering in collaboration with you to make this community one in which we truly hold and support one another in both our joys and our sorrows.

With the removal of "acting" from in front of Minister of Congregational Care, we now have all the time we need to continue shaping this ministry into something shared and something sacred.

Congregational Care

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

Wonder, open-hearted engagement, courageous action

SUNDAY SERVICES | OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Sunday Services

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

January 4: Broken Open by Joy

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair | Ollie Stocker, Worship Associate

Sorrow endures for the night but joy comes with the dawn, writes the psalmist. Moments of joy, whether quiet moments over a cup of coffee, or life changing moments like the birth of a child, can open us to new experience and leave us transformed. As we begin a new year in an icy season, how can we cultivate our capacity for transformation?

January 11: Broken Open by Grief

**Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair
Veronica Nordeng DeVillez, Worship Associate**

“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.” C.S. Lewis’s *A Grief Observed*, is a firsthand account of the months after his spouse’s death. In it, the 20th century theologian grapples with what it means to feel truly lost, unable to depend on the beliefs and certainties that shaped his life. Moments of grief change us, creating a dividing line in our stories between the time before, and the time after loss.

January 18: Broken Open by Love

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair | Charlie Caswell, Worship Associate

Love breaks us open, not always in a single supernatural moment, but in a slow accretion of changes. When we love, we loosen our grip on the self; what is good becomes more than just what is good for me. In love, we become the best versions of ourselves, together.

On Story Sundays, children in grades 1-8 begin in worship with the congregation in the Sanctuary. After the Story for All Ages, Rotation children (grades 1-5) proceed to their classrooms for religious education programming while middle school youth (grades 6-8) remain in the Sanctuary for the entire worship service.

January 25: Broken Open by Transformation

**Amy Brunell, Hallman Ministerial Intern
Chris Russert, Worship Associate**

At pivotal moments in life, when change is no longer optional, we are confronted with a profound question: How do we find the courage to step into a new way of being? Let’s explore the threshold moments when we choose to move toward transformation rather than retreat from it — allowing ourselves to be broken open, and forever changed.

Send an email to martha@unityunitarian.org if you would like to provide flowers for a Sunday service.

Offering Recipients

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

January 4

[Evergreen Quilters](#) is a group of members and friends of Unity Church who quilt or want to learn how to quilt, and who love to share their creativity and skills with the wider community. Their creative work is displayed at church, shared at the Celebration of New Lives, donated to families at Project Home and sold several times a year as a fundraiser for their community partners including Jeremiah Program, Project Home, Star House Crisis Nursery, and Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf. This collection will underwrite the purchase of a variety of quilting materials.

January 11

[Project Home](#) provides 24/7 emergency shelter and rapid exit case management services for area families facing homelessness. Stabilizing services include basic daily needs, meals, laundry, and case management along with assistance finding housing, employment, daycare, financial education (budgeting, saving, credit/debt recovery), and onsite mental health therapy. This collection will support their American Indian outreach providing culturally respectful diabetes education and relevant youth enrichment programs.

January 18

[Jeremiah Program](#) located in St. Paul’s Summit-University neighborhood, supports single mothers and their children as they pursue career paths, life goals, and chart pathways to economic mobility. Unity’s Evergreen Quilters provides meals for the mothers and their children several times a year. This collection will provide personal hygiene products as well as supplemental apartment needs for the infants, children, and mothers at Jeremiah Program.

January 25

[The Good Acre](#) is the largest non-profit food hub in Minnesota. Its mission is to unlock economic opportunity for farmers in our region through a unique combination of personalized support and market development. Their LEAFF (Local Economic Accelerator for Farmers) program supports emerging small farmers by purchasing their fresh food for local food shelves, thus fostering a healthier, more equitable food system. Unity Church has sourced ingredients from The Good Acre for its food ministry. This collection will support its local community supported agriculture (CSA) program.

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

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

Breaking Open: To Be Transformed

LauraSue Schlatter, Beloved Community Communications Team

News of George Floyd's lynching came on a perfect spring afternoon in 2020. Following surgery for breast cancer and during chemotherapy I had a long-lasting respiratory virus with high fevers, sore throat, and headaches, likely COVID. Feeling shaky, but better, with only a couple of weeks of radiation to go, May's blooms and walks brought hope. Then I heard and saw George Floyd calling for his Momma and plummeted into dark waters.

Three nights later, I huddled in the basement of my home with Lou, my older child. Home from grad school to help care for me, Lou would have been with the protesters but for my fear of getting sick again. As we watched on our cell phones, we saw our local businesses, post office, and police station fall as Black and white ally protesters confronted law enforcement. Protesters were thrown to the ground, injured and bleeding. A conflagration, torched by inflammatory white outsiders come to take advantage of the pain roiling our city, sent acrid smoke into the air. Some of the worst of the chaos and flames were less than a mile from our home. I shivered in the dark, eyes pasted to images of people wrestled to the ground, library windows shattered, store support beams twisted. Lou's reassurances failed. I had never been so afraid.

In the morning, I braved the kitchen window to see unscathed yards outside. Despite reports from neighborhood watchers of white people with out-of-state license plates driving through our neighborhood overnight, the mainly-Black church two doors down stood untouched. My heart pounded in my throat. I was afraid to step out. The radio played voices of Black neighbors in north Minneapolis mourning the loss of local businesses, speaking of fear that was not new to them, of anger at another lynching. That was how many saw

George Floyd's death — yet another execution, without judge or jury. A lynching.

Something inside me broke open. The Black voices touched the fear at my core. Hiding in my home, a "go" bag packed in case I had to flee, the fears that BIPOC neighbors had carried for centuries were manifest in me. While mine were new and small in comparison, I understood at my core what it might be to live with this fear every day of my life. I understood that all the antiracism work I had done in the past had not taught me to feel fear this way. I broke open and was transformed. The transformation was a somatic understanding that my BIPOC neighbors, friends, co-workers, people of my city, all were caught in a vise of fear.

My underlying faith allowed me to break open, and to be transformed. Our new ends statements tell us to "understand the interconnected roots of oppression and yoke ourselves to the demands, sacrifices, and hard work of antiracism, multiculturalism, and climate and economic justice . . ." They also exhort us to "practice lifelong faith formation. . . that breaks us open and allows us to be transformed."

On that day in 2020, I knew that my faith had taught me that we are all inherently worthy, and that babies are born with a divinity that entitles all of us to love. I had practiced prayer and silence enough to have found ways to allow myself to open to what, for me, feels like a divine presence. I had experienced hearing the still small voice within and allowed myself to follow its wisdom. I had an intellectual understanding, from participating in antiracism workshops, of the causes and effects of systemic racism. I thought I had done what I could to point out systemic racism at work in the world.



But before George Floyd was lynched and I was terrified of the uprising so close to my home, I did not understand how oppression is a Human problem. The people who are oppressed are not the only victims of oppression. We are all victims of oppression. The difference is that the people who are the oppressors have the power to change the status quo. Isabel Wilkerson has said, "We are all one race. The Human Race." We Humans created and interwove oppressions ingeniously — to benefit some at tremendous cost to others. As we did so, we lost control of the weaving. Cost and benefit can no longer be controlled. We all lose now. Using some of us to benefit others at a cost to the ones being used is a loss to all. Pull one thread and the entire piece unravels.

Since that day at the end of May in 2020, my focus has changed. I was able to experience, if only for a moment, how it feels to be a BIPOC person in this country. That transformation released me to transform further. I am grateful for the underlying faith that continues to inspire me on this journey.

LauraSue Schlatter is a longtime member of Unity Church. She has recently joined the Beloved Community Communications Team.



WELCOME NEWCOMERS



Welcome Words

Philippa Anastos, Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant

Over the past year, I've witnessed both new and long-time members of our community allow themselves to break open and transform. This kind of spiritual opening takes real courage; it asks us to release what is familiar and step into something not yet fully known — but the values of integrity, service, and joy lead us inevitably to that place. This year, may we break open like mind spring flowers — opening not through fracture, but in a joyful burst of growth.

Finding Yourself at Unity

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

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

January classes include:

- January 4: Faith Formation & Religious Education
- January 11: Building Tour
- January 18: Worship & the Liturgical Year
- January 25: UU History

Join the Welcome Team!

The Welcome Team is expanding! Every Sunday we greet new visitors and old friends, help individuals navigate the building, usher, collect the offering, and more. As our weekly numbers grow, more team members will help us greet at additional entrances and provide more guidance to newcomers. If you are interested in joining the Welcome Team, or in trying a shadowing shift, contact Philippa Anastos at philippa@unityunitarian.org.

Volunteer to Give Rides

We're looking for volunteers to give fellow community members rides. Your kindness and support will help others connect and participate. To offer your help, please contact Philippa Anastos at philippa@unityunitarian.org.

New Fellowship Group

The Women in Retirement group is expanding to add an all-ages Women's Coffee Group on alternate Saturdays! The group is open to all individuals who identify as a woman and offer the time to create a multigenerational community of joy, care and belonging. Meetings will be held the first and third Saturdays of the month, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m., in the Center Room. Questions? Email Laurel L'Allier at lallierlaurel@gmail.com.

Fellowship Groups

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Men's Conversation Group: Monday, January 5 and 19, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Zoom. Discuss a range of topics, offer support, and connect.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, January 12 and 26, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Robbins Parlor

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

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

Unity Book Club: second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Zoom.

January 13: *The Art Thief* by Michael Finkel
February 10: *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett

Women's Coffee Group: first and third Saturday of each month (January 3 and 17), 10:00-11:30 a.m., Center Room

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

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



We Are Broken Open

Marcia Hayes, Chair, Board of Trustees

Happy New Year! After the solstice, I hope you're loving the return of the light. After our December congregational meeting, the board is excited to come together to plan the year. We will hold our retreat in late January. There will be time to tackle some logistics — Who will write the newsletter article in March? — but that will not be the focus. During discussion in December, it was clear that there is a need for something else. When asked what we should include in the retreat, the consensus was for space. Time to get to know each other. To build trust. To be a bit silly. The nuts-and-bolts learning is necessary, and other time can be devoted to it. The clear request was to come together.

Just after our December meeting, I attended A Light in the Storm by ISAIAH. Rev. Oscar encouraged us to attend this program during a December service. Organizers planned this event as a call to action with a faith-based response to injustices of affordability, dignity, and community. I found the group from Unity, and we cheered, clapped, and committed to action. I had found myself in a room with over 5000 other people, from all over Minnesota, who also wanted to come together.

I think it's what we're all feeling. We all want to come together to be transformed. We want to transform the world to bring about the beloved community, where love and justice prevail.

But what happened first? We were broken open.

Our third end is:

Practice lifelong faith formation, grounded in Unitarian Universalist theology, that breaks us open and allows us to be transformed.

Last year's board listened to the congregation speak about your wishes for Unity Church. When thinking about our value of open-hearted engagement, we heard gratitude for the community, and the hope you had to know you were not alone. The gratitude was for being held in difficult times. The struggle was uncomfortable and hard, and then, transformative. There was pain before the transformation, and the gratitude in rebuilding with your faith community. Wrought faith.

During the retreat to generate the ends, we knew that we needed to emphasize our faith, and growing it, so that we could live it. The words before "theology" came easily. The rest was a struggle. It needed to carry pain and hope. You were clear that this was a painful process, and we were not to look away from that.

This discussion turned into a beautiful demonstration of our congregational faith, where we come together and truth emerges. We asked our ministers why we should study our faith, and this end emerged. Our faith teaches us, we are broken open.

I hope this context lets you see this end in a new light.

Unity Church Ends Statements

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

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

Facilities Update: Solar Panels

We are so pleased to announce that the church will be installing solar panels on the Eliot wing roof in 2026. Our contract with Cedar Creek Energy was approved just in time to take advantage of remaining federal incentives for solar installations and the energy savings should pay for the installation in 21 years, earlier if we can obtain an additional incentive from Xcel energy. We'll use a specialized mounting system to avoid having to penetrate the roof.

Stay Connected

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



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

Planting Seeds of Justice

UUSC Partner Team

Krista Finstad Hanson and Clover Earl



The Unity Church Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) Partner Team has been working to bring a connection back to Unity Church.

The UUSC works to advance human rights around the world and at home in the U.S. Their four main areas of focus are:

- Climate Justice,
- Democracy & Civil Liberties,
- Humanitarian Crisis Response, and
- Migration Solidarity.

The UUSC works in partnership with 77 grassroots organizations that are working towards positive changes in their communities.

In 2024, the UUSC gave out \$2.5 million in grants and 12,660 Unitarian Universalist donors supported the organization. We are looking forward to hearing updates on their 2025 year and how our Unity Church congregation contributed to the cause.

The Guest at Your Table program was offered to our congregation from October to December in 2025. We distributed approximately 150 donation collection boxes. Contributions can be given to the UUSC at any time of the year, and if you participated in this year's fundraiser, we hope you will make your contribution before the end of the year!

A stated goal of the UUSC is: "We strive to make the world a more equitable place, one where no one experiences oppression based on who they are and where we all are given a chance to prosper."

Will you help us build the capacity of the UUSC's important work in the world and here at home? Unity's UUSC Partner Team is looking for additional members. Email Clover Earl at 2clover@gmail.com if you are interested!

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

Visit UUSC's website to learn more: uusc.org.



Remember to send your Guest at Your Table donations to the UUSC!

A Teaching Congregation

Pauline Eichten for the Archives Team (Pauline Eichten, Patt Kelly, Louise Merriam, Carol Miller, Betsy Moore, and Deb Woodburn)

Amy Brunell is the Hallman Ministerial Intern for the church year 2025-2026. She follows a long line of Unity interns who learned about being a minister at a large congregation. That history is why we're known as a teaching congregation.

It began with a request from Meadville Theological School, now Meadville-Lombard. Then-minister Arthur Foote agreed to accept a fourth-year student as an intern starting in 1960. There was no salary for the first intern, Kenneth Helms, but the congregation offered housing and reimbursement of other expenses. In later years, we included intern expenses in the annual budget.

In 2002 the Hallman Ministerial Intern Fund was established to provide stipends to the Hallman interns. The fund honors The Reverend Dr. Laurel Hallman, ordained by Unity Church in 1982. Laurel Hallman was a staff member in the early 1970s who got an opportunity to offer an occasional sermon at Unity and consequently discovered her calling. She eventually became a minister and served 22 years in Dallas, Texas, where she was the first female senior minister at a large UU congregation.

There have been gaps when we couldn't find any listing of interns. From 2019-2024 there were no interns because of the COVID shutdown and ministerial transitions. For other time periods — 1967-1978 and 1987-2001 — the record is silent about interns. If you have any information about those years, please contact us at archives@unityunitarian.org.



Photo Identification Update

In November 2025, we asked *commUNITY* readers about this donut seller. Ross Huelster stepped up, reporting that the young man is William Riley, whose mother was Barb Bezat. Ross noted that William would have been about 15 in 2001.

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

January 14

Dinner: Miso-glazed root vegetables, rice, dessert

Cooking for People and Planet Simple ideas for eating more plants! Parish Hall & Zoom

Unity's Act for the Earth Team invites you to celebrate food in January with Beth Dooley, James Beard Award-winning food writer, columnist for the *Star Tribune*, regular guest on KARE 11 and MPR and the author of over a dozen cookbooks. Beth is a passionate believer in, and advocate for, local agriculture and food systems. "If you get interested in your food," she says, "you'll want to learn where it's grown and who is growing it. And that connects us to the world." Come and be inspired, whether you are an avid cook or simply enjoy good food!

Poetry to Enrich: Spiritual Practice Robbins Parlor

Pivotal moments in our lives can break us open — to insight, to sorrow, and to joy. Poetry is an opening to feel more alive in those moments. It invites us to pay attention to the changes within us, to see things through different eyes, and to become more open to the world. Join poets Margaret Hasse and Marg Walker, Unity Church members and authors of several books of poetry, for an evening of poetry reading and reflection on the topic of breaking open.

Lectio Divina | Gannett Room & Zoom

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

Young Adults Group | Center Room

A fun, reflective group working to build multifaith and multicultural community.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room

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

[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. Each week we share:

- Meaningful time and nourishing food together (5:45)
- Multigenerational worship in Ames Chapel (6:45)
- Opportunities to play, learn, and practice (7:10)

January 21

Dinner: Meatloaf, green beans, mashed potatoes, blondies

Introduction to Zen Buddhist Meditation: Seeing Suffering, Awakening Compassion, Acting with Wisdom | Parish Hall

This introductory session to Buddhist meditation with Rev. KP Hong weaves meditation practice and justice-making in the world. In cultivating stillness, we begin to see suffering without distortion. Such clarity gives rise to compassion, and from compassion awakens courage as the creative and fearless application of wisdom to relieve suffering. For justice cannot be sustained by outrage alone; it requires resilience, wisdom, and compassion cultivated in practice.

Discussion of *The Serviceberry* Gannett Room & Zoom

Following-up on the Indigenous Justice team's December 10 program on Economic Justice and Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery, we will discuss Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, *The Serviceberry - Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* and talk about next steps for enhanced learning about alternative economies.

Five Theological Questions: *How do we live in the face of death and loss?*

Come prepared to engage in personal reflection and share your responses with participants in a small group format.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room

January 28

Swedish "meat"balls, egg noodles, roasted broccoli, yellow cake

Legislative Advocacy 101 Parish Hall & Zoom

Please join the Act for the Earth Team and the Indigenous Justice Team for a presentation by Tom Houle and Eóin Small on legislative action in preparation for Rise and Repair Rally Day on February 17. [Rise and Repair](#) is a "diverse alliance of people and organizations advancing Indigenous Rights and climate justice in Minnesota's legislature." Come learn how you can join in reparative work by engaging with your legislators and by showing up at the Capitol during the 2026 session in support of environmental legislation that protects our state's most precious resources. Tom Houle is a volunteer advocate and member of the Minnesota Repair Communities for Makoce Ikiccupi. Eóin Small is the Alliance Organizer and Facilitator for Rise and Repair.

Seed Library Creation | Art Room

Help the Act for the Earth Pollinator Team sort donated native seeds into envelopes and boxes for their 2026 Seed Library. Bring any seeds you know the common name of that are "two Latin name/no cultivars" native plant seeds to add to the library, and take some home with you. We will then plant seeds in tubs during a February winter sowing event to prepare for late spring pollinator gardens.

Young Adults Group | Center Room

A fun, reflective group working to build multifaith and multicultural community.

Hymn Sing | Robbins Parlor

At each session participants sing a hymn from our hymnals; discuss its music, text, history, and theology; and share personal reflections on the music and its meaning.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Stepping into Veganuary

Anna Newton, Act for the Earth Team

Cooking is an intimate and immediate way to connect with the natural world and each other. When I'm hungry for hope, I cook and share good food. — Beth Dooley

When I read this, I knew we had found the right speaker to headline Act for the Earth's January Wellspring Wednesday programming (see page 8). As we hunger for hope, what is more meaningful than feeding people in this time of safety net cuts? Beth's approach to food speaks to me. Through her relationships with local cooks she has introduced us to traditional Hmong and Indigenous foodways. She celebrates seasonal, local ingredients, elevating humble farmer's market squashes, beans and greens into colorful, tasty meals. It inspires me to do the same.

I suffered a heart attack in 2019, and there is nothing like a brush with mortality to bring things into focus. In the course of my rehab, I met with a dietitian who emphasized the benefits of a plant-forward diet. The real *ah-ha!* came as I realized how completely dietary health recommendations overlapped with humanitarian concerns and planetary health needs. This launched me on a journey to replace ground beef in spaghetti sauce with turkey, then mushrooms and lentils... eventually omitting the meat altogether. "Meatless Monday" morphed into eating meat once a week. This food journey has been a joyous adventure, an opportunity to reimagine the food on my plate. I may not go totally vegan, but I am ready to give it a try!

What is Veganuary?

Joining with fellow travelers to share experiences magnifies the joy and resolve. Act for the Earth invites you to join us for Veganuary (Vegan January)! Not, perhaps, by giving up all animal products but by adopting a plant-forward diet for 31 days.

Veganuary was founded in 2014 in the United Kingdom with the goals of supporting people in following a plant-based diet and making plant-based food more mainstream and accessible — to protect animals and the planet, and to improve human health. Participation has grown from 12,800 registered participants in 2015 to 25.8 million people from 20 countries in 2025. The non-profit, crowdfunded organization is credited with encouraging supermarkets, restaurants and institutions to offer more delicious, plant-based options.

See their 2025 impact report and sign up for the Veganuary Challenge on their U.S. website, which provides coaching emails, free recipes, meal plans and advice: veganuary.com/en-us.

Interested in trying vegan food? The Act for the Earth Food Conversations Team will offer tastings at the Act for the Earth table in Parish Hall on Sundays in January.

Holiday Regifting Sale

Regift...and Rejoice!

Sunday January 11
Parish Hall

Did Santa bring you something that is not your size, your style or your idea of fun? Donate your new but unwanted gift to Unity Church! We'll sell it to someone else, turning your cast-offs into cash.



Doing your part to reduce, regift, recycle (and rejoice) also helps our planet! Bring your unused, unwrapped items to the "regifting tables" in Parish Hall on Sunday, January 11, before either service. We'll sell items at a discount at the Regifting Sale. Unsold items will be donated.

This event is co-hosted by Unity's Act for the Earth and Mano a Mano Community Outreach Ministry Teams, to benefit Mano a Mano. Mano a Mano builds clinics, schools and infrastructure and trains teachers, doctors and subsistence farmers in rural Bolivia. Unity's Act for the Earth Team sponsors monthly swaps to reduce consumption and encourage recycling, among many other initiatives.

Travel to Bolivia with Mano a Mano

May 17-27, 2026

Information Sessions: Sunday, January 25 and February 8
After services | Gannett Room

Join Rev. Oscar and Mano a Mano International for a trip to Bolivia! This trip will focus on water, food, health and education, with Rev. Oscar helping us connect the work of Mano a Mano to our Unitarian Universalist faith. The trip will help us to understand the interconnected roots of oppression and yoke ourselves to the demands, sacrifices, and hard work of antiracism, multiculturalism, and climate and economic justice. For more information, contact Ann Mabbott at amabbott@hamline.edu.

Mano a Mano Team Meetings

Unity's Mano a Mano Community Outreach Ministry Team meets on the second Wednesday of every month, at 1:00 p.m., at Mano a Mano headquarters: 925 Pierce Butler Rte, St Paul. The team will spend an hour sorting medical supplies and then meet for planning and updates about Mano a Mano work in Bolivia.

Come to practice your Spanish!

Join Unity's Mano a Mano Team for Spanish conversation every Thursday, at 1:00 p.m., at Mano a Mano headquarters: 925 Pierce Butler Rte. For more information, contact Chuck Griggs at griggscb@msn.com.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

A Light in the Storm

Debrief and Next Steps

Sunday, January 4 | 1:00 p.m.
Foote Room

Send a note to Clover Earl at 2clover@gmail.com if you plan to participate.

Last month over 70 people from Unity Church joined 5000 Minnesotans at the Minneapolis Convention Center to hear from Isaiah and Faith in Minnesota about their People's Agenda focused on greater affordability, dignity, and community in the moment we are in together. On January 4, we will gather to talk about our experiences at the event, ask if we see our own work reflected in the agenda, learn about the statewide precinct caucus scheduled for February 3, and consider our next steps at Unity Church. Please attend this next steps meeting whether or not you were at the December event.

Donate to Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

833 pounds of food donated in November!

Thank you for helping our neighbors! After the holidays donations typically drop. Let's make 2026 the exception to that trend. Please continue to donate generously.



During January and February the food shelf needs toilet paper, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, all-purpose cleaner, shampoo and conditioner, body lotion, and hand and body soap. Nonperishable food and financial donations are also accepted: hallieqbrown.charityproud.org/donate.

Navigating Your Role in Social Change

Using the Social Change Ecosystem Framework

Three Sundays: January 11, 18, and 25 | 1:00-3:00 p.m. | Unity Church
Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection by Deepa Iyer is available for purchase at the Unity Bookstall.

Join Hallman Intern Amy Brunell for an engaging, reflective class designed to help you understand how you show up in movements for equity, justice, and solidarity — and how your role connects to a larger, interdependent ecosystem of change.

Developed by Deepa Iyer in 2017, the Social Change Ecosystem Framework has become a widely used tool for congregations seeking to work more collaboratively and sustainably amid complex community challenges.

In this workshop you will:

- Explore the ten roles people and organizations take on in moments of crisis, movement-building, and collective action;
- Learn how to strengthen your relationships and collaborations within your broader ecosystem;
- Discover practical ways to engage in social change efforts that are more effective, interconnected, and sustainable.

Who should attend?

- Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Team members.
- Anyone interested in understanding their role in social change.

2026 Pilgrimage to Transylvania

Join fellow Unity Church members on a summer pilgrimage led by Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair to the Unitarian homeland of Transylvania. Pilgrims will gather in Budapest, Hungary, on July 31, 2026, and travel to historic sites in Hungary and Romania where the Unitarian faith was debated and defined in the Reformation Age. Pilgrims will spend six days living with families in the Unitarian village of Homoródszentpéter, with whom Unity has had a partner church relationship for three decades. The small village of about two hundred inhabitants offers an intimate immersion into Unitarian culture in the Hungarian-speaking province of Transylvania, Romania. The pilgrimage ends on August 13 in Sibiu, Romania, from where pilgrims can make airline connections to complete their journey.

The Partner Church Team will hold an information session on Sunday, January 18, after the 11:15 a.m. service, in Robbins Parlor and on Zoom: bit.ly/transylvaniainfo26. The session will cover the details of travel and cost. Attend the session and learn about the opportunities for spiritual growth on pilgrimage, within, among, and beyond. We encourage families and young adults to consider joining us for this special opportunity.

Pilgrims will be asked to make a down payment in March with final payments due in May. There is some scholarship aid available to help with costs.

Check the [Partner Church Team webpage](#) for updates and send questions or notes of interest to unitypartnerchurch@gmail.com.

Obama School Team

As the new year begins, we send our appreciation to this congregation and all you have done to support the work of nearly 40 Unity volunteers at Obama Montessori Elementary and Obama Middle School in 2025. Now that our relationship with the school community is well established, more and different requests for assistance are coming our way. Stay tuned through the winter and spring for news about connecting to our work!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Housing Justice Team

Unity Church helps Project Home build a library!



Judy Miller (left) of Unity's Housing Justice Team and Shelley Butler (second from left) of Unity's Library-Bookstall Team collaborated with leaders from other faith communities to create a new library at Project Home. Thank you!

Project Home is busy renovating the Best Western building at 1010 Bandana Blvd. W in Saint Paul to shelter families. The completed first floor is currently occupied by 29 formerly unsheltered families (97 people in total). When the second floor is ready, this number will double.

Shelley Butler, one of Unity's Library-Bookstall Team leaders, was approached by Project Home to develop a library within this new facility. Along with volunteers from several other faith communities, Shelley stepped up to sort through books, organize the space and create signage. She also went through the proper channels to secure Unity Library-Bookstall Team funds to purchase needed labels and sign holders for the new library. Judy Miller, of Unity's Housing Justice Team, also volunteered in this success. Our Housing Justice Team is in a long-term partnership with Project Home.

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

Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East

You're warmly invited to a meet and greet with Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME), Unity Church Unitarian's newest Community Outreach Ministry Team.

Join us in Parish Hall between services on Sunday, January 25, to meet the team, learn about our vision and hopes, and explore ways to engage in thoughtful, compassionate responses to the ongoing human rights crisis in Palestine/Israel. Whether you're simply curious or feeling called to deeper learning and action, you are welcome.

Come say hello, ask questions, and help us begin this new ministry together.

What Are Red Flag Laws?

Gun Violence Prevention Team

January 2026 marks two years since Minnesota enacted the Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) law — popularly known as the “red flag” law. ERPOs are civil court orders that temporarily restrict firearm access for an individual who is behaving dangerously and presents a high risk of harm to self or others. By authorizing the temporary removal of firearms and prohibiting new firearm purchases, ERPOs are designed to prevent gun violence (including suicides, mass shootings, and other homicides) when the risk of violence is clear.

Currently, 22 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia have some iteration of this law on the books. In Minnesota, a family or household member, a chief law enforcement officer, a city or county attorney, or a guardian can file a petition for an ERPO to be issued. Emergency short-term ERPOs can go into effect immediately for 14 days or after a hearing, a long-term ERPO can last six months to a year.

ERPOs and ERPO-style laws are most frequently used for cases of suicidal ideation. A 2024 multi-state study estimated that one life was saved for every 17-23 ERPOs issued. In its first year as law in Minnesota, 135 ERPO petitions were filed, the majority by law enforcement. Ninety-five percent of short-term petitions were granted by the courts, 78% of long-term orders were granted.

While not perfect, the availability of Extreme Risk Protection Orders is a tool that can save lives. For more information, please visit the [Minnesota Department of Public Safety](https://www.mn.gov/department-of-public-safety) website. Visit [Unity's Gun Violence Prevention Team webpage](https://www.unitychurch.org/gun-violence-prevention-team) for how you can get involved with the work of this team.

Chalice Circles

We are gauging interest for a new circle that would start in January and run through June. The circles, led by trained facilitators, meet each month to reflect on the spiritual practice packet. Tell us if you're interested: bit.ly/midyearcc26.

Sangha Practice

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

Ames Chapel

Through weekly practice of meditation, we discover a clarity of mind attentive and accountable to each moment of life's flow, and touch the mystery of our original face. This group is open to anyone interested, no experience is necessary, and instructions will be provided. Email kp@unityunitarian.org to join the practice.

Lectio Divina

Second Wednesday and Fourth Tuesday of Each Month

7:10 p.m. | Zoom: bit.ly/lectioucu

Come experience the alchemy that occurs through focused reflection on an inspirational text. Led by Shelley Butler and Lisa Wersal; facilitated by your own heart.

Active Hope for the New Now Practice Gathering

Monday, January 12

7:00-8:30 p.m. | Robbins Parlor

The topic for the January practice gathering is ICE raids. The intention is not a discussion of the issue but to move through the Active Hope Spiral of grounding in gratitude, touching into feelings, seeing with new and ancient eyes, and gathering our capacities for action in response to this issue.

Congregational Spiritual Retreat with KP & Shay

Save the date: March 27-28, 2026

Mount Olivet Retreat Center
Day and overnight options

Our Favorite Colors

January Parish Hall Artists

OT Artists is a St. Paul based, studio artists cooperative that dates way back to 1958! Their artist members and studio spaces have changed over the years, but their commitment to being a gathering place and supportive community remains steadfast. They currently consist of 13 painters who work side by side and share studio space at 106 Water Street in the FOK Studio building near Harriet Island. The OT Artists collective hosts weekly figure drawing sessions year-round and participates twice a year at the St. Paul Art Crawl.

Eight members of the co-op exhibit work collectively around the metro area and are delighted to be showing paintings at Unity Church from January 2-29. Please come view paintings that feature "Our Favorite Colors." Artists Sarah Boyle Carmack, Pat Cleary, JoAnn Frekot, Katharine Gotham, Vera J. Kent, Tom McGregor, Claire Stokes, and Christine Tierney will each be showing paintings and sharing their favorite color. Several of the artists will be available to meet and discuss their art after services on January 4 and 11.





The Library-Bookstall Team Breaks Open a New Year

Shelley Butler and Kim Tyson, Library-Bookstall Team

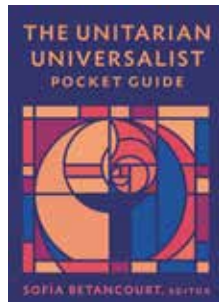
At the risk of preaching to the choir, it bears repeating that our beloved Anderson Library and our ever-so-popular Bookstall offer a wide range of materials to support ongoing exploration of [Worship Themes](#) (January: "Break Open"), [UUA Shared Values](#), and [Unity's End Statements](#), including a range of faith/belief subjects, personal growth, poetry, art, fiction, and more. New titles are added regularly to ensure fresh opportunities for discovery.

The Anderson Library is located on the second floor, down the hall between Ames Chapel and the meeting rooms, and is open following each service when volunteers are on hand to assist you. That's not all: the library is open to use any other time that a meeting is not in progress — feel free to go in, turn on the lights, and enjoy. Search the [online catalog](#) from the library or at home; anywhere that you can connect to the internet, you can access the library catalog.

The Bookstall in Parish Hall is open Sunday mornings or at other times by appointment. If you have questions or book suggestions for either the Anderson Library or the Bookstall, please contact us: library@unityunitarian.org.

Below are a few of our newest offerings. These titles can be borrowed from the library or purchased at the Bookstall.

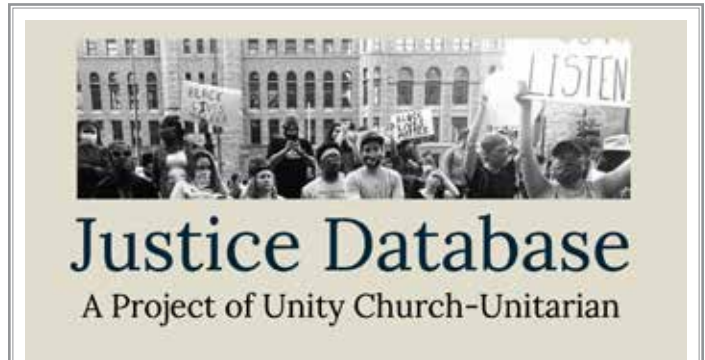
The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide, Seventh Edition, edited by Rev. Dr. Sophia Betancourt, President of the UUA. Skinner House Books, 2025. Contributors include Rev. Cheryl M. Walker, Rev. Ashley Horan, Rev. Dr. Sheri Prud'homme, Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd, Rev. Katie Romano Griffin, Dr. Dan McKanan, and Rev. Victoria Safford, among others. Not only for those new to Unitarian Universalism, the new guide offers resources and information for current times.



The New Science of Social Change by Lisa Mueller, PhD. Beacon House, 2024. In this time of an historic swell of activism in the U.S. and around the world, here is an accessible guide for activists. Lisa Mueller translates cutting-edge empirical research on effective protest and includes voices of experienced activists to put needed and proven tools in the hands of active social justice advocates.

Happy New Reading!

Integrity, service, and joy.



[In The Justice Database](#)

ISAIAH is not a new organization and not new to Unity members, but when attending the Light in the Storm convening in December, we learned about the incredible growth of this org that includes a wide variety of chapters, projects, and leaders. Take a look and get involved.

Read for the Earth

Winter Book Club with Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light



Registration: bit.ly/mniflbookclub

Unity's Act for the Earth Team community partner Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light is hosting a book club to read inspiring works that speak to this moment and discuss how the proposed ideas could work in a local context. Meetings are from 6:30-7:45 pm via Zoom.

- *Here Comes the Sun* by Bill McKibben, Thursday, January 8
- *Mini-Forest Revolution* by Hannah Lewis, Thursday, February 5
- *On Power* by George Crocker, Thursday, March 6

Unity Book Club

The Unity Book Club meets on the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00-8:30 p.m., on Zoom. To get connected, please email Dave Kaminski at kaminskibd@gmail.com.

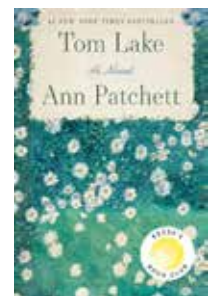
January 13

The Art Thief by Michael Finkel



February 10

Tom Lake by Ann Patchett



Wonder, open-hearted engagement, courageous action

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



There Are No Other People's Children

Katrina Nichols, Nursery Coordinator

As a rule, I try not to cry in front of children and youth at work here. But like most rules, this one has been broken sometimes with good cause.

The good cause is this: When I practice allowing it to, the truth “there are no other people’s children” often breaks me open.

This is how I came to be weeping in front of a circle of high school juniors in a public park in Boston on a beautiful October afternoon. A more cynical person might blame these tears solely on the late nights, early mornings, and busy days. These factors certainly contributed. The high school Boston pilgrimage is *engineered* to break us open. And then we toured the open air Holocaust memorial, walking through silently at our own pace, and I was done for.

I confessed to the high schoolers as I confess to you now: since the birth of my first child, I became very selective about the stories I read. I can’t handle the kind of intensity I used to be able to. If a child or a woman comes in harm’s way in the story, I can not help but imagine this child or this woman as my own child. I feared if I “went there,” then I’d be a puddle of tears and no longer able to function. I’d be breaking my rule about crying in front of kids all the time.

I confessed to them as I confess to you now: there is a wall I erect in my imagination around my children, and therefore my heart, so that I can receive the heartbreaking news about children in Gaza or Ukraine or the latest violent disaster and still attempt to be the calm presence that the children in front of me require.

But with this wall destroyed by exhaustion, the hard truth of “there are no other people’s children” was allowed to break me open, like it ought to. Through the tears, I shared this with these beloved youth, and tears flowed around the circle.

“You broke me open, Katrina,” one reflected to me. “In a good way.”

And with his words, I remember that the “good way” is sometimes also the hard way, the tearful way.

Childcare for Church Events

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

Youth Musical

For youth in grades 6, 7, and 8!



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

The musical is a unique production created each year for Unity by Mary Blouin Auffert and Sandy Waterman.

All middle school students (grades 6, 7 and 8) are invited, and everyone who auditions will get a part in the play.

Auditions

Thursday, January 8, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Foote Room

Parent/Guardian Meeting

A required parent meeting will be held during the auditions on Thursday, January 8, 7:00-8:30 p.m., in Anderson Library. Meet with the co-producers, learn more about the production, and sign up to volunteer.

Important Dates

Rehearsals begin Thursday, January 11, and are held Sundays, 1:30-3:30 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Unity Church.

Tech week is March 15-March 18.

Performances are Thursday, March 19, at 7:00 p.m., Friday, March 20 at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday, March 21, at 4:00 p.m.



Volunteers from the Unity Church community, ages 6th grade to adult are welcome to help with the crew, staging, costumes, technical help, marketing and programming. For high schoolers, this can count towards service hours.

Questions? Please email unityyouthmusical@gmail.com.



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

Sunday, December 14, was a full and rich Sunday at Unity Church. I was exhausted but happy after a successful performance of Benjamin Britten's *St. Nicolas* the night before. The performance involved the entire Music Ministry, including our newly formed orchestra, and I had the joy of collaborating with Ruth Palmer, our Director of Music Ministries Emerita,

and Kathy Kraulik, our recently retired pianist. The building was alive all weekend with carols and desserts, a holiday boutique, and people of all ages milling about.

The two services included a rowdy carol shout, old and new carols, and several funny and somewhat stressful moments when the organ decided to malfunction. That morning was also packed with rehearsal and preparation for the annual Christmas pageant, among many other things happening at the church. I made sure to deliver Christmas carol books to a group heading to a nearby retirement community to sing for the seniors. Rev. Oscar preached about Santa Claus, though he had to abbreviate his sermon with everything else going on! There was so much music in the morning's worship services that YouTube automatically labeled the service video as a "music video."

After the morning services, I headed over to Incarnation Church in Minneapolis, a Catholic church with a very large Latin American congregation. Border CrosSing would be performing there the following weekend, and I usually attend their Spanish-language Mass to make an announcement about the concert and offer free tickets. Normally, on a Sunday in Advent on the weekend of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe the congregation would number close to a thousand people. That Sunday, there were barely a hundred.

Sunday school had been canceled for weeks, as parents no longer felt safe dropping off their children. Posadas were canceled. The holiday concerts and celebrations for the Virgin of Guadalupe were canceled. The choir and band were absent, so all the music in the service was provided by a single singer at a microphone and a keyboard player. After Mass, there was a special prayer for people who had disappeared that week, along with requests for the community to support their families. One of those who had disappeared was the father of four young children; he was last seen when he was arrested by ICE at a construction site earlier that week.

Once Mass began, the doors to the sanctuary were locked. Members of the community had been scouting the streets around the church, and after Mass, people remained inside until clergy shared which routes were safe to take home and which to avoid. People left quickly, instead of lingering for conversation and fellowship.

As I prepare for the Christmas marathon at Unity Church, I am reminded of what an immense privilege it is that we get to do all of this here. The Advent and Christmas experience this year at churches with large immigrant congregations, some just down the road from us, is profoundly different. My concerts and events in these spaces feel precious and necessary in a way they have not before. I hope that as we move into the new year, we all do our part to make the world better, and also go into our own spaces with a deep awareness of our immense privilege and of the profound value of the music we get to make together. We get to do this.

Food Ministry at Unity Church

Pancake Breakfast



Saturday, January 17 | 8:30 a.m.

Parish Hall

Email Tom Zell at tomzell@me.com if you would like to help.

Wellspring Wednesday Cooks



Join us for kitchen ministry! No previous experience is required as we give on-the-job training. We only ask you have a collaborative spirit and are willing to put love into the food we prepare and serve.

If you are interested, you can sign up here bit.ly/wwfood26 or email Heidi at heidi@unityunitarian.org.

Coffee Hour Help

Working in the kitchen during coffee hour on Sundays is a fun way to meet people at Unity Church. Interested in learning more? Email heidi@unityunitarian.org.



YOUTH MUSICAL AUDITIONS ARE JANUARY 8



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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

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

NON-PROFIT ORG.
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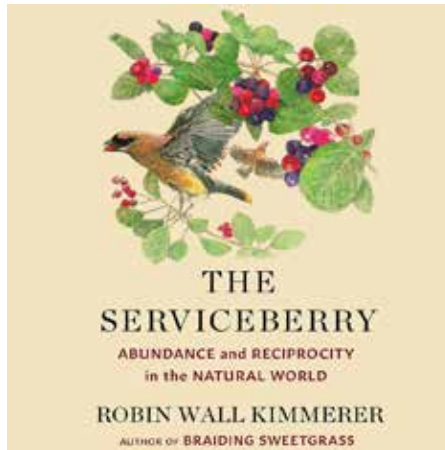
**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**



Beth Dooley

Cooking for People and Planet
Simple ideas for eating more plants!

Wednesday, January 14
7:10 p.m. | Parish Hall & Zoom



The Serviceberry

*A book discussion with Unity's
Indigenous Justice Team*

Wednesday, January 21
7:10 p.m. | Gannett & Zoom



Legislative Advocacy 101

*Reparative work at the intersection
of Indigenous and climate justice.*

Wednesday, January 28
7:10 p.m. | Parish Hall & Zoom



Youth Musical

For youth in grades 6, 7, and 8!

Auditions are Thursday, January 8. Turn to page 14 for details.

