

Interconnected Roots

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.

"The good works of the Lord are all around," Nebraska Poet Laureate Ted Kooser writes in "The Red Wing Church." In the poem, Kooser describes a small town in rural Nebraska which has converted the old church into a resource for the community — pews dot front porches up and down the streets, the steeple top is a henhouse in a yard, the church building itself is Homer Johnson's barn. "The cross," the poem ends, "is God knows where."

Our theme for the month of November is "interconnected roots," and as I start thinking and writing about the theme, I find myself reflecting on the image of the church in Red Wing, Nebraska. Rather, the community of Red Wing, Nebraska, tied together by this shared legacy of a building no longer used for what it was created for, but nevertheless present in the day-to-day life of the people of Red Wing. Whether a church building, or legacies of oppression, or the memories of those who have gone before us, this is often how interconnected roots find expression in our lives.

The whole ends statement, from which this month's theme is taken, reads "Understand the interconnected roots of oppression, and yoke ourselves to the demands, sacrifices, and hard work of antiracism, multiculturalism, and climate and economic justice." Interconnection, in this frame, points us toward the hard work of intersectional justice. Intersectionality is a word that has had a lot of meaning read into it, but at its core, the idea that Kimberlé Crenshaw and others began to articulate in the

late 20th century was straightforward: When we talk about oppressions as if they are isolated from each other, we lose something important about how they exist.

Racism exists in American society. Misogyny exists. But we get to a more interesting, complex, important place when we try to understand how gender and race intersect. Likewise, it is easy to see advocates for racial justice and advocates for class and economic justice as competitors (indeed, when Stacie and I lived in New York ten years ago, the tension between "Bernie Bros" and Black Lives Matter activists was significant). When we deepen our engagement though, we can start to see that racial oppression in America has always had an economic component, and racial tension has often been intentionally used to distract from economic oppression. It is only when we understand these problems as interconnected that we can begin to see potential paths forward.

In addition to talking about the interconnected roots of oppression, spend some time this month thinking about other ways interconnected roots find expression in your life. Last month my grandfather died, and I have been reflecting over the last several weeks on how the life I am living is in dialog with his — how his career as a professor of American Thought and Language is in dialog with Unitarian Universalist Ministry, and how I can see the roots of questions that I keep coming back to stretching back to him. This is how roots can be interconnected: though my grandfather was never a Unitarian

Universalist, one of his mentors was Sidney Mead, a professor of religion at the University of Iowa who went on to help found Meadville Lombard Theological School, the Unitarian seminary in Chicago.

On November 2 we will gather as a congregation for our annual Tolling of Bells service. It is a chance to remember those we have lost in the last year, both personally and in the wider community. This year it is also an invitation to remember how the stories we tell on that day are not disconnected, but part of a single root system that binds us together in shared humanity.

For good and for ill, we are in this together.

Rev. Oscar

On behalf of the Theme Team

Theme Resources

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

Access all the hyperlinks in this newsletter by scanning this QR code.



JUST WORDS



Just Words

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, Senior Minister

This fall I was asked if I was willing to be appointed to fill an unexpired term on the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) Board of Trustees. I said yes, and just returned to Minnesota from my first in-person board meeting in Boston. Most of the work of the board happens remotely. Since COVID, trustees usually only meet once a year in person for a longer retreat and meeting time.

To talk about the UUA Board, it is important to say what the UUA is. The Unitarian Universalist Association is an association of just over 1000 congregations across the country, including Unity Church in Saint Paul. The UUA is not a hierarchal structure, it is not "the boss," but instead is a voluntary association of independent congregations, all of whom choose to be together in this particular structure. It is democratically governed by an annual General Assembly that takes place in June, and by an elected Board of Trustees for the remainder of the year.

The UUA sees itself as the embodiment of the covenant between the constituent Unitarian Universalist congregations. Our congregations are yoked together for work in the world, through common work for justice, and some very practical pieces (i.e. managing the health insurance and retirement plans of UU religious professionals). The UUA serves as the yoke itself, the connecting piece holding the different congregations together and helping them to move together as efficiently as possible. The three-part mission of the UUA (similar to Unity's ends) is to 1) equip congregations for health and vitality, 2) support and train lay and professional leaders, and 3) advance Unitarian Universalist values in the world.

There is a long relationship between ministry at Unity Church and service to the larger denomination through the UUA. My immediate predecessor Rob Eller-Isaacs served on the UUA Board from 2014-2017. Somewhat more distantly, Unity Senior Minister Frederick May Elliot chaired the UUA's Commission on Appraisal in the 1930s, before leaving Unity Church to serve as UUA president in 1937. Arthur Foote, who served as Unity's senior minister from 1945-1971, was asked to run for UUA president, but emphatically refused the offer. Roy Phillips, who served the congregation in the late 20th century, had a particularly contentious relationship with the UUA, at one point withdrawing support for the larger association from Unity's budget.

I hope that my own service is in the best of this tradition, supporting our larger movement as an expression of my ministry here in Saint Paul. Just as Unity Church is, in some very real ways, how we make manifest the beloved community between our individual members, the UUA is one of the ways we build the beloved community on a national level.

In the remainder of the term I was appointed to, I look forward to working on some of the quieter, but important, parts of board service, particularly around governance and finances. I have been lucky, over the last year at Unity Church, to observe up close how a well-functioning, well-boundaried policy board can help an institution like a church or denomination live into the fullness of its mission in the world.

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.

If you are experiencing an urgent need for pastoral support, call 651-300-9123.

Facilities Update

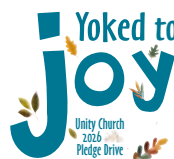
Many of you have noticed the dark stains on the Sanctuary ceiling as you meditate on Sunday mornings and have wondered whether it was mold. Last year, when the stains first appeared, we brought out both our roofing contractors and consulted with the firm that managed our 2012 building remodel. All agreed: there are no leaks, and that's not mold. Most thought it was soot from the candles. We're working to bring out a firm to set up scaffolding and clean and paint over the stains. Still have questions or other building concerns? Contact Laura at laura@unityunitarian.org or Reed reed@unityunitarian.org.

In other facilities news, we now have leak-free boiler venting, energy-efficient LED lights throughout the building, and the artist who originally crafted our "We Dare Not Fence the Spirit" sculpture that was vandalized last summer has started recasting the replacement pieces. All made possible with gratitude to the Dickerman Building Fund for the financial resources.

Make your 2026 pledges today!

unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html

Making a pledge today will help ensure a 2026 balanced budget is presented to the congregation at the annual meeting on December 7. Thank you for your generosity!



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.

November 2: Tolling of Bells

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair | Isaac Fried, Worship Associate
Join us for Unity's annual service of remembrance for the members of our community who have passed away in the last year. As we gather near the traditional observance of All Souls Day, we remember the stories of those who have gone before, and how they are intertwined with our own. Everyone will be invited to light a candle for someone they loved and lost in 2025.

November 9: *Breaking Up the Roots*

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair | Sarah Cledwyn, Worship Associate
Unity's new ends statements call us to "understand the interconnected roots of oppression." What tools do we have to see the complexity of interconnected, intersectional oppression, and how do we begin to dismantle it in our congregation and the broader world?

November 16: *Theory of Water*

**Rev. Shay MacKay
Veronica Nordeng Devillez, Worship Associate**
Taking inspiration from the beautiful writings of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a renowned Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg musician, writer and academic — join Shay in exploring how water can inspire new ways of thinking about relationships, promoting a "vision of relationality that transcends traditional boundaries."

November 23: *Inherent Mirth and Dignity*

Liz James | Anna Newton, Worship Associate
What do you do when the life you had imagined for yourself is stuck in committee? Join us for the story of the Unitarian Universalist Hysterical Society... The practical joke that accidentally turned into a 300 thousand person Unitarian Universalist community on Facebook. It's a story of feeling lost, finding yourself, and UUism-outside-the-box.

Liz James is the founder of an online UU community called the Unitarian Universalist Hysterical Society, half of The Cracked Cup podcast, and is working on a book with Skinner House Press. She also runs Mirth and Dignity, an organization devoted to supporting diverse expressions of Unitarian Universalism.

November 30: *Hope as a Theological Directive*

**One service at 10:00 a.m. only!
Amy Brunell, Hallman Ministerial Intern
Ollie Stocker, Worship Associate**

Without hope, how can we authentically evangelize love? Hope, however fragile, can sustain us. It anchors our conviction and guides our commitment to serve with faith, compassion, and resilience.

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.

November 2

[Padoc Area Scholars Society](http://PadocAreaScholarsSociety.org) (PASS) helps South Sudanese youth rise above poverty through education, especially young women who face challenges including high rates of violence, early and forced marriage, and limited educational and economic opportunities. PASS provides scholarships to technical and four-year colleges in South Sudan. This collection will go toward the annual tuition cost of \$450.00 per student. Unity's Dayna Kennedy is a supporter of PASS.

November 9

[Small Sums](http://SmallSums.org) envisions a world where everyone has equal opportunity for economic and housing stability that leads to transformed communities. Small Sums helps workers prepare for the workforce by providing required items, such as clothing, shoes, and bus passes. Small Sums also provides tools for construction workers, welders, barbers, chefs, and other trades while covering union dues and professional license testing costs, renewal fees, certifications, and training.

November 16

[The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library](http://TheFriendsOfTheStPaulPublicLibrary.org) invests in libraries through fundraising, advocacy, and programming rooted in the belief that libraries are essential to building strong communities. This collection will support library homework centers where students of all ages can drop in and work on their homework independently or with the help of volunteer tutors. The centers are equipped with computers, printers, reference books, and school supplies for students in need.

November 23

[STAR House](http://STARHouse.org) is a non-profit crisis nursery dedicated to providing temporary, emergency childcare services for families facing crises or experiencing overwhelming stressors. They offer a safe, nurturing environment where children (from newborns up to age six) can stay temporarily while their parents or guardians address urgent situations. Unity's Evergreen Quilters support STAR House with donations from their quilting sales. This collection will assist STAR House in its transition to a larger facility.

November 30

[Open Cities Health Center](http://OpenCitiesHealthCenter.org) was started in 1967 in the basement of St. James AME Church on Dale Street and Interstate 94. Today it is a major provider of culturally competent, full spectrum health care for the uninsured and underinsured. Serving over 10,000 clients annually, Open Cities uses a sliding scale and turns no one away. This collection will support its behavioral health program.

BELOVED COMMUNITY STAFF TEAM

A Lesson Learned in Haiti: "We" Instead of "Us versus Them"

Shelley Butler, Beloved Community Communications Team

Haiti will break your heart. I'm not the first person to say so, but I'm reminded of what Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs used to say, that when a heart breaks open, it makes more room for love.

Flying over the Caribbean Sea is a magnificent experience. From a distance islands like Hispaniola appear as small rocks that rise out of the vast water that surround them. It's only when you get closer that you see the dividing line down the mountain — the Dominican Republic on the lush green side and Haiti on the denuded bare side. It's an obvious first sign that something is not right in Haiti. As the plane comes down over Port au Prince, the vast neighborhood of makeshift homes that make up Cite Soleil (City of the Sun) appears; infamously known as the largest (and to me scariest) slum in the Western Hemisphere.

I worked with a small nonprofit that partners with a community of nuns in Haiti for several years and have been there half a dozen times, for grant writing; to tour the education, farming, and elder care projects we support; and to lead immersion trips. When I'm asked what it is like there, I think of the deep pink-magenta bougainvillea blossoms in full bloom that won't be denied as they wind around nasty looking razor wire atop most middle-class homes. Or the view from Kenscoff, where there is farming and trees in the mountains above Port au Prince, that belies the reality down there, where gullies throughout the city are filled with trash being picked through by a pig or goat or maybe even a child. Children who may live in a shack with no water or electricity come to school pressed, clean, and as happy and goofy as grade school kids anywhere. It's a land of contrasts.

Haiti is a place where examining my own privilege and white superiority was inescapable; it smacks you in the



Pictured on this page: Kids at Ecole Notre Dame de l'Annonciation in Leogane, Haiti.

face. Nothing in the United States or anywhere I've traveled in Europe compared to the sights, sounds, smells, and jarring car rides in Haiti. After a few trips, the stench outside the airport became familiar, but God help me if I ever get used to sights like a mother washing her baby in a puddle of water on the side of the road, an orange-haired child with the extended belly of starvation, or a toddler in an orphanage crib so devoid of hope he doesn't cry for attention anymore.



Though Haiti was born from revolutionary struggle against colonial oppression, the legacy of racial hierarchies endures in the form of colorism, with wealth and status disproportionately held by those with lighter complexions. Such classism remains deeply entrenched, exemplified by the system of restaveks which still exists. Yet beyond these inherited structures lies another form of racism that is largely of foreign import, brought in

by the thousands of organizations and church mission programs full of white people with the best of intentions to help the poor. Many, if not most, find it nearly impossible not to compare "us" to "them," especially when the differences can be so stark and devastating. The common reaction is, "What can we do to save them?"

As you'd expect, antiracism doesn't exist in Haiti as we largely know it here. There are no workshops on intersectionality and microaggressions. The "us" versus "them" savior complex may be the most obvious racist attitude, of which I was (and often still am) guilty. When I felt my heart breaking, I looked to our Haitians partners to direct me, to tell me what was needed, and let more love into my heart to walk beside the remarkable Haitian nuns who had let me in, despite belonging to Unitarian Universalism, a religious oddity in a country where Vodou is practiced alongside Christianity.





Welcome Words

Philippa Anastos, Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant

This month, we're exploring how many forms of oppression stem from the same roots — roots that are, by design, difficult to see. When our communities are fragmented, we lose the ability to help one another and to recognize the full shape of the challenges we face. In that division, shame takes hold, keeping us from weaving our stories into a whole. So, where better to explore this than within our own community? This month, seek out stories that seem far from your own. Sit with them. Notice how they connect to your experience, even when those connections are uncomfortable. By tracing these shared roots, we uncover places where healing can begin.

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.

November classes include:

- November 2: Congregational and Pastoral Care
- November 9: Social Justice and Community Outreach
- November 16: UU History
- November 23: Building Tour

Request Childcare

Nursery care is provided during Sunday services and Wellspring Wednesday programs. Care is available upon request for any church program by emailing katrina@unityunitarian.org at least one week in advance.

Religious Education Enrollment

Enrollment in Religious Education at Unity Church is ongoing. Please email Nelson Moroukian at nelson@unityunitarian.org to enroll a child.

commUNITY is the monthly newsletter of Unity Church. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication. Subscriptions (digital and USPS) 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.



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, November 10 and 24, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Zoom. Discuss a range of topics, offer support, and connect.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, November 3 and 17, 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

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

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.

November 11: *The Inconvenient Indian* by Thomas King
December 9: *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon
January 13: *The Art Thief* by Michael Finkel

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.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Resiliency

Rich Lau, Trustee

As we approach the dark nights of winter, it is hard to imagine that the sun will shine again. The promise of solstice may be just around the corner on the calendar, but it is far away in our hearts. Add to the normal seasonal anxiety, the miserable reality of a country and a people that we no longer

recognize. Compound that with fear, sadness, anger, and even hopelessness each time we turn on the TV or look at our phones, and the shadows threaten to overwhelm us. It is hard to think, much less to speak of, resilience when each day seems to further erode our faith in institutions and shake our foundations.

But none of this is new. It wouldn't be new to 19th century Chinese immigrants who watched Congress pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, banning the Chinese in America. This law was preceded and followed by violent butchery of immigrants in California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Colorado, Wyoming, and countless other American places. Today's news wouldn't be surprising to the African American survivors of the two-day long 1921 slaughter in Tulsa, Oklahoma, nor any other of the African American victims of mob carnage in Wilmington, North Carolina; East St. Louis, Missouri; Elaine, Arkansas; or Rosewood, Florida. Or those who suffered centuries of legal American slavery, discrimination, and institutional injustice. And don't forget that Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., the beloved lion of free speech, also wrote the 1927 majority 8-1 decision in *Buck v. Bell* supporting the legal forced sterilization of "promiscuous" and "imbecile" women. The American eugenics programs were later used by the Nazis to justify theirs. This history of political, religious, legal, and societal hatred toward "others" is as historically long and as institutionally American as apple pie.

But I think of my parents who rarely spoke, but then quietly and furtively, of living in occupied China during World War II. Their stories were of soldiers indiscriminately and brutally harassing, assaulting, and executing people. My parents spoke of years of real starvation, relatives who disappeared, dead bodies in the street, and sheer terror. They carried deep emotional scars; they always knew where their identity papers were and where to go if they had to flee. Nevertheless, they endured. They were resilient. Of course they were afraid for themselves, their families, their friends and neighbors. But they did what they could to save each other and themselves, even when it seemed like there was no hope, even when all was dark. For years. They endured. They were resilient.

Resiliency takes many forms — rallies, protests, organizing, lobbying, and even cosplay in Portland. I submit to you, however, that the most radical form of resiliency in the face of darkness is to go to church. Our church. A church where we understand the interconnected roots of that oppression and yoke ourselves to the demands, sacrifices and hard work of justice. Where we cultivate a multigenerational community of joy, care, and belonging and we evangelize love. Our church, where we practice lifelong faith formation, grounded in our theology. It is a practice and a theology that breaks us open and transforms us. As it is often said: we are the church. We together have faith. We together will endure. We together will be resilient. We will build the beloved community. Together, we are not alone in the dark.

See you at church.

6

Integrity, service, and joy.

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, December 7

1:00 p.m. | Sanctuary and Zoom

Unity Church will hold its Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Sunday, December 7, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. Please plan to participate either in-person in the Sanctuary or online via Zoom (registration is required to participate online, watch for details). This year's meeting will include the election of new trustees (see page 7) and a vote to approve the 2026 budget.

Help us build a more accurate budget! If you haven't already, [make your 2026 pledge today!](#)

All are welcome to attend the meeting. Only voting members can vote! If you have questions about your membership status, please contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

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.

Wonder, open-hearted engagement, courageous action

BOARD OF TRUSTEES NOMINEES



Taylor Burr

In 2000, my partner Suzanne and I came to Unity Church seeking a spiritual home for ourselves and our young child. What we found was far more than a community — we discovered a place that would shape our family’s journey, ground our values, and deepen our connection to the world around us. From singing in the early Unity Singers to mentoring and facilitating Coming of Age, my involvement at Unity Church has grown in step with my own spiritual growth. I’ve witnessed firsthand the power of belonging to a multigenerational, justice-rooted, diverse, and joy-filled congregation — and feel immense gratitude that our now three children grew up within such a transformative space.

I stepped up to serve as a trustee because the church has given so much to me and our family, and I want to help ensure its future reflects the imagination, compassion, and strength of our shared values. I’m energized by the continued work of turning our end statements into action — helping our community live fully into its commitments to equity, belonging, and spiritual growth. I believe in collaboration, creativity, and the sacred work of showing up for one another and our wider world. It would be an honor to serve the congregation at this moment in our shared journey — and I’m excited to imagine, build, and sustain the future of our beloved community together.



Sarah Ford

I’ve been re-energized of late in my membership at Unity Church, and I am at a point in my life wherein I have both the energy and time necessary to focus on serving this beloved community. At this awful moment in human history, I am energized by our new end statements, those that center love in our commitment to one another and in our community outreach, activism, and partnerships. Like all of us, I am struggling to position myself effectively, appropriately, and intentionally, that I might be of use in our collective resistance to overwhelming terror and human suffering. My professional work has been centered in education policy, union work, and teaching. My direct activism work right now is focused on the resistance movement as it relates to our immigrant brothers and sisters.

I have been a member of this church off and on since my teenage years. Recently, I helped plan a Unity Church gender retreat, helped bake a lot of pies to support LGBTQ proms, and engaged in more transformative conversations than I can count. I’ve just finished a term of three years as a worship associate, working in that span with three different senior ministers, our incredible staff, and some really talented and engaging lay leaders.



Kat Sherman

I have been a member of Unity Church since 2013, after a short search for a church home that ended when my family attended our first Arthur Foote Music Sunday. Surrounded and uplifted by the music, my spouse Fritz and I knew we had found our spiritual home — and, with the help of our daughter, drew more family into the fold. I have been participating in the religious education program as a middle school teacher for over ten years, and I sing in the Women’s Ensemble. More recently I served as a mentor in the Coming of Age program, had the honor of being part of the most recent Ministerial Search Team and I am a current teaching associate. The whole family is now deeply, joyfully entangled in Unity’s community.

I’m grateful for the spiritual enrichment — and challenge — found here and am excited to bring those experiences of Unity’s complex, diverse community to board work. I work in public policy professionally, and outside of work I enjoy exploring the outdoors at all levels from city parks to National ones, hiking, knitting, reading, cooking, friends and family. My family and I live in St. Paul along with our two dearly beloved — and extremely spoiled — cats.

Save the Date: Sunday, December 7 | 1:00 p.m.

Annual Meeting of the Congregation of Unity Church–Unitarian

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday

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.

Schedule for the Evening

Dinner begins at 5:45 p.m. in Parish Hall, a short multigenerational service begins at 6:45 p.m. in Ames Chapel, and programs begin at 7:10 p.m. Childcare is available and advance registration is not required.

The cost for dinner is \$10/adults, \$5/child (ages 5-12), \$3/child (ages 2-4), and \$25/family. If you need financial assistance to help cover the cost of dinner, please email Philippa Anastos at philippa@unityunitarian.org. If you plan to join us and need a special dietary preparation (vegetarian, dairy-free options are available), please email Heidi Birkholz at heidi@unityunitarian.org.



Food Ministers Welcome Here

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/wwfood25 or email Heidi at heidi@unityunitarian.org.

November 5

Dinner: Chicken tagine, couscous, mixed greens, lemon bars

Faith and Justice: Responding to Deportation and Detention Threats Robbins Parlor and [Zoom](#)

Join Unity's Sanctuary Justice Team for part-two of a three-part series exploring how our community can stand with immigrant and trans neighbors facing persecution, displacement, and exclusion.

Deportation and detention have become defining features of U.S. immigration enforcement, separating families, destabilizing communities, and placing countless lives at risk. This session will provide an overview of how detention and deportation systems are operating, highlight the human impact of these policies, and offer testimonies and stories that bring the realities into focus. Together, we will reflect on our call to welcome the stranger and stand with the marginalized, and we will explore practical ways our congregation can respond, from accompaniment and court support to advocacy and solidarity with immigrant-led organizations.



2025 Congregational Survey Discussion | Anderson Library

Join Bill Etter and members of the Board's Evaluation Committee as we discuss the results of the 2025 Congregational Survey. We'll look at the analysis, and discuss how the board uses this information in its role of monitoring progress with our ends. Questions welcome!

Five Theological Questions – Large Group | Gannett Room

What is the nature of the higher power?

Facilitated by Nathan Schultz, Nathan Jacobson, Monica Digre, Ruth Lencowski
Explore one of the five questions at the heart of systematic theology. These same questions guide the church's religious education program, with our youth sharing their answers — however provisional — each year at Coming of Age. Come prepared to engage in personal reflection and share your responses with participants of all ages in a large group format. The small group session for this question will be held on November 19. All participants are invited to share a statement of faith at the final session on April 15, 2026.

Somatic Yoga | Foote Room

Experience a gentle, nervous system-informed yoga practice designed to help you pause, tune into yourself, and release tension stored in the body. The class is accessible to anyone comfortable sitting on the floor, bring a yoga mat, blanket, or blocks for added comfort. Led by Dr. Tamara Kraft, a somatic psychotherapist and holistic health coach.

Young Adults Group | Center Room

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. To be added to the Young Adults email list, email kp@unityunitarian.org.

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

November 12

Dinner: Spinach lasagna, tricolore salad, olive oil cake

Sea of Grass: Conversation with Authors Dave Hage and Josephine Marcotty | Parish Hall and Zoom

Feared by pioneers and scorned by tourists, the American prairie is nevertheless one of the most important ecosystems on Earth — a vital buffer against climate change, a source of clean water for millions of Americans and home to iconic creatures such as meadowlarks, wolves, eagles and bison. Yet today we are plowing it up at the rate of one million acres a year — as fast as we're destroying the Amazon rainforest. In their new book, *Sea of Grass*, journalists Dave Hage and Josephine Marcotty explore this quiet environmental crisis and profile inspiring farmers and conservationists who are trying to save the land, the water and the wildlife.

Creating Sanctuary: Faith, Justice, and Support for Trans Neighbors | Parish Hall and Zoom

Join Unity's Sanctuary Justice Team for the final of a three-part series exploring how our community can stand with immigrant and trans neighbors facing persecution, displacement, and exclusion.

As anti-trans legislation and sentiment spreads across the country, many transgender individuals are being forced to seek safety and sanctuary in states like ours. This session will lift up the lived realities of trans neighbors who have been displaced, exploring the challenges they face in accessing healthcare, housing, and community belonging. Rooted in faith and justice, we will consider how our congregation can offer support, affirm dignity, and stand in solidarity with trans neighbors in a time of fear and exclusion.

Vigil for Gaza | Center Room

Over the last two years we have witnessed the heartbreaking loss of life in Gaza. Please join us as we gather to remember, grieve, and stand in solidarity with those who have suffered unimaginable losses during the genocide. By bearing witness to the struggle of our Palestinian siblings, we seek to honor and humanize their existence.

A Spiritual Practice to Feed Your Soul: Lectio Divina Gannett Room | Zoom

Is it poetry? Is it meditation? It's a bit of both — Lectio Divina! 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. Led by Shelley Butler and Lisa Wersal; facilitated by your own heart. Register once and attend as often as you are able. Questions? Contact Shelley at library@unityunitarian.org.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room

Email mayraquitza@hotmail.com by 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday to ensure a lesson.

November 19

Dinner: Chili, jicama salad, cornbread, cranberry lemon bars

Cultivating the Sacred Well of Resilience | Anderson Library

Join educators Jackie Smith and Sara Ford for part-three of a four-month series designed to cultivate resilience and well-being in the lives of educators. Rooted in care, connection, and community, this course is ideal for anyone seeking greater clarity, balance, and sustainability in their work. Wherever you are in your teaching career, developing habits that support wellbeing can help sustain the joy and purpose of teaching in an increasingly complex world.

Five Theological Questions – Small Group | Robbins Parlor ***What is the nature of a higher power?***

Explore one of the five questions at the heart of systematic theology. Come prepared to engage in personal reflection and share your responses in small group conversations. Children under age 12 are welcome but should be accompanied by an adult.

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.

Somatic Yoga | Foote Room

Experience a gentle, nervous system-informed yoga practice designed to help you pause, tune into yourself, and release tension stored in the body. The class is accessible to anyone comfortable sitting on the floor, bring a yoga mat, blanket, or blocks for added comfort. Led by Dr. Tamara Kraft, a somatic psychotherapist and holistic health coach.

Young Adults Group | Center Room

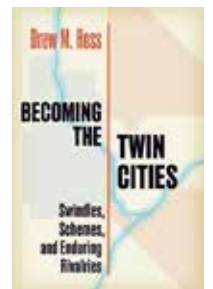
Unity's Young Adult Group is a fun, reflective group of people working to build multi-faith and multicultural community.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room

Email mayraquitza@hotmail.com by 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday to ensure a lesson.

Coming to Wellspring Wednesday December 10

Join Unity Church member Drew Ross for the launch of his new book, *Becoming the Twin Cities: Swindles, Schemes and Enduring Rivalries*, published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. In this engaging, deeply researched, and well-written book, Drew tells the story of how first geography, but soon politics, commerce, confident men and outright crooks kept St Paul and Minneapolis separate cities, not one great city on the Upper Mississippi, that contemporaries thought inevitable.



ART TEAM

Creative Storytelling

"We have art so that we shall not die from reality" —Nietzsche

The November and December artists exhibiting in Unity's Parish and West Halls are masters of storytelling with fanciful and imaginative style. Meet the artists after services on Sunday, November 2. An artists reception will be held on Friday, November 21, at 5:30 p.m.

Rod Bland is a Canadian born, Minnesota based artist known for creating photographs that push beyond what would be observed or taken in everyday life. His photographs are staged, composed and constructed carefully as if they were stills taken from a movie, book or play that does not actually exist. Rod started his career as a visual effects artist for film and television and initially did not have reservations about creating images that were heavily manipulated through computer graphics. Over time, he has reconsidered this process and has cut back radically on using these techniques. Part of reason is the fact that images can now be manipulated so easily through AI and he feels there is a loss of humanity in this. Consequently, he now photographs many things on film and limits his "manipulation" through attentive lighting, staging and whatever can be done in a darkroom. His hope is that these efforts and this process can translate back into humanity.



Heather Leigh Digolo is an acrylic painter who started painting (as a hobby in 2014) about her relationship with animals through the recovery process. She carries her deep love of animal connection, music, and daily process in her body of work. She includes collage in some of her processes, and insights received from dreams and visions. She was born in St. Paul and paints from the Twin Cities area.



Ann Solyst is a local painter whose work is both whimsical and meditative. Loosely inspired by bizarre descriptions of animals in medieval Bestiaries, her playful animal combinations are sometimes puns, sometimes ironic, and sometimes simply evocative. Although fanciful, Ann's sensitive style and subdued palette suggest wildlife or storybook illustrations rather than fantasy drawing and the captivating individuality and sweet personalities of her creatures asks the viewer to slow down, come closer, and relate. How did this creature come to be? Where do they live? Are they friendly, thoughtful, or playful? Through these delicate and beautifully odd animals Ann celebrates the abnormal, the unusual, and the uncategorizable.



Our Creative Community

Unity's Art Team invites you to share your art or craft in this Congregational Art Exhibit!

Do you enjoy the art exhibits in Parish Hall while you have Sunday coffee and donuts? Do you take time to check out the intriguing visual pieces and discuss them? Our Art Team hopes you do! Visual arts are an integral part of our spiritual life at Unity Church which we are always looking to deepen. In February and March of 2026, our Parish Hall will be filled with art from our church community — and that could include you!

Unity Church is a place to bring our full selves, our joys, our sorrows, gifts and wounds. Some gifts are easier to share at gatherings — vocalists can share their singing in worship, creative cooks can whip up magic in the kitchen. The visual artists among us need a special space to share what they are working on. Through their practice and work, we see how they cultivate joy and express ideas in ways that words cannot. In 2021 we organized a congregation-wide art show, to showcase the talented artists and fine craftspeople among us. That show was magnificent in so many ways. The Art Team plans to make the congregational art show a tradition, as a way to build stronger connections among us and involve the congregation directly in the art life of this church.

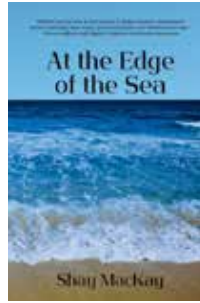
If you create visual art or fine craft and would like to share it in an open-hearted way with the congregation in 2026, please see the [Art Lives at Unity page](#) on Unity's website where you will find all the details about how to participate. We invite you to be part of this special aspect of creating beloved community and submit your artwork!

All Good Things: Books, a Bus and Bags

Shelley Butler, Library-Bookstall Team

Whether you are still struggling to understand spiritual practice or whether you have been on a clear path for a long time, Unity's own **Rev. Shay MacKay's new book, *At the Edge of the Sea***, is a beautiful, rewarding read. I wasn't sure what to expect from this thin volume of essays and poems, but without ever mentioning Unitarian Universalism, she clarifies what our faith calls us to do: to develop spiritual practice that opens us to transformation, and blesses the world. Everyone can find inspiration here (meaning you all should read this book!).

It is a primer (for lack of a better word) for living a life with intention to experience the holy everywhere and in everything, which is how she describes mysticism. Using wisdom from many sources, the four-part practice offers an understandable way to lead such a life. Organized well, each part begins with an invitation and an introduction to ground us in opening to experience. Then, what makes this book special are the stories from Rev. MacKay's life; real world illustrations of the truth of what she writes, and that enable us to see more clearly how to develop our intentions and the ways in which transformation can happen. Thank you for this, Rev. MacKay.



Mark your calendars for Friday, November 14, at 6:00 p.m. for The Poetry Bus!

What's that, you ask? A quartet of charming, award-winning poets have taken poetry on tour around the state and the next stop is Unity Church! I hear tell they spread joy wherever they go. Come hear Sara Dove Wudali, Athena Kildegaard, Michael Kleber-Diggs, and Su Love read and tell tales from The Poetry Bus 2025 Tour, and (maybe) more as they launch their short but sweet new collection, *The Sweet*. Here's a sample from Athena Kildegaard:

Act

as if the buzzing of comets
tickled your soles, as if doubts
were suspenders holding up
courage.../ Embrace levity.

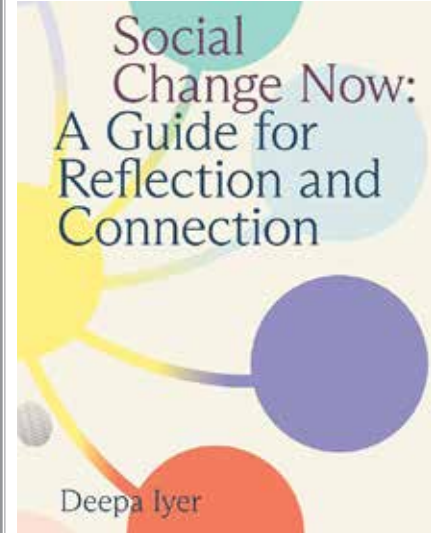
New in The Bookstall: PeaceCYCLE Tote Bags from Haiti

Clean water is scarce in Haiti, and many in Port au Prince purchase small bags of purified water every day, for about four cents each, resulting in thousands of bags ending up as litter. PeaceCYCLE is a small company whose all-Haitian group of employees gather the bags, clean, cut, and iron them together to create a new kind of fabric, and then sew them into super-strong bags. Your purchase benefits Unity's Library and Bookstall, and also helps keep Haitians employed during one of the most violent and anarchic times in the history of our neighbor country.



UU Common Read

The 2025-26 UU Common Read is ***Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection*** by Deepa Iyer (Skinner House).



Unitarian Universalists are invited to explore Iyer's work through the lens of our UU faith and shared values. Participants explore Iyer's Ecosystem model, the roles that comprise it, and how these can support the congregational community and, in turn, our role in wider communities where we work with others for social change

When we do a UU Common Read together, we share in reflection, learning, and action. Join Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance for an online multi-congregation exploration of Iyer's work. Sessions will be held 6:00-8:00 p.m. (CT) on Thursday, November 6, 13, and 20. Details and sign up at bit.ly/sochnow.

Social Change Now is available in Unity's Anderson Library and Bookstall. It is also available online at inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop.

Members of Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Teams will be invited to a participate in a Unity Church planned Common Read program in January 2026. Watch for more details on this offering.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Act for the Earth

Active Hope for the
New Now Workshop

Saturday, November 15
9:00 a.m.–noon | Foote Room
Registration: bit.ly/ahnewnow

We are living in a time of disruption and uncertainty in this country. Hope is hard to sustain: hope of slowing the climate disaster; of defending human rights and environmental protections; of protecting necessary policies and services.



This three-hour workshop is designed to build capacity for staying resilient, converting despair into action, and working toward a habitable and just world. "Active Hope," according to Joanna Macy, is not something we have but something we do. The "now" of this time is calling — this workshop will help you respond to that call!

Questions? Contact Jean Hammink at jeanhammink@gmail.com.

To request childcare, please email Katrina at katrina@unityunitarian.org by November 8.

Holiday Treat Supplies and Decorations Swap

Sunday, November 16
After services

Join the [Act for the Earth Team](#) and come swap holiday cookie and candy tins, plates, mugs, cookie cutters as well as those extra decorations taking up space but no longer serving your holiday needs. Passing along items from your holiday decoration stash builds community and keeps items out of landfills and incinerators — a holiday miracle!

Evergreen Quilters

Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

We are building a stronger connection to our Hallie Q. Brown neighbors. Our donations are trending upward again which is very good news, *thank you!* During the month of September, we donated 343 pounds of food to the Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf.



During November please donate the following food items: corn bread mix; canned corn, green beans, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie filling; and mashed potato mixes. If you would like to donate money to purchase turkeys or hams, contributions are gratefully accepted at hallieqbrown.charityproud.org/donate.

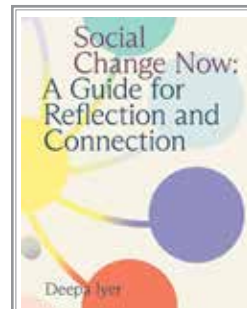
2025 Quilt Raffle

"Hope in Bloom" is the latest Raffle Quilt to be offered by Unity's Evergreen Quilters, with tickets going on sale in mid-November. This quilt is indeed one-of-a-kind, and suitable for hanging on a wall or displaying on a bed. This is a work of art and an example of real quilting finesse on the part of longtime Evergreen Quilter Peggy Wright. It features colorful appliqued floral designs nestled among pieced medallions with abundant quilting flourishes in between. Peggy created the hand applique work over many years, finally bringing it to Rose Allen, who assembled it and had it professionally quilted.



We're calling it a queen-sized topper, 64x80 inches. Raffle tickets are \$2.00 each, cash or check only, and the drawing for the quilt will be held on Sunday, December 14, at 12:30 p.m., in Parish Hall. You need not be present to win!

Evergreen Quilters now supports four St Paul community partners: Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf, Project Home temporary housing for families, The Jeremiah Program, and Star Crisis Nursery. The making of Evergreen quilts and gift items is fully self-supported and 100% of the proceeds go to these non-profit organizations. Please support them generously!



UU Common Read

The 2025-26 UU Common Read is ***Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection*** by Deepa Iyer

Members of Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Teams will be invited to participate in a Unity Church planned Common Read program in January 2026. Watch for more details on this offering. To participate in MUUSJA's online exploration in November, turn to page 11.

Guest at Your Table

UUSC Initiative Returns After 10-year Break

Krista Finstad Hanson and Clover Earl, UUSC Partner Team

The Unity Church UUSC Partner Team is excited to bring Guest at Your Table back to Unity Church as it offers us an opportunity to live into our newly established end:

Cultivate a multigenerational community of joy, care, and belonging, and evangelize love to meet the deep and abiding hunger in all of us.

Following Rev. Mary Katherine Morn's sermon last spring, a group of Unity Church congregants got together to re-ignite our congregation's connection to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), a "nonprofit, nonsectarian organization advancing human rights together with an international community of grassroots partners and advocates." Learning more about and financially supporting the UUSC gives us a chance to put our "faith in action."

The Guest at Your Table (GAYT) program, celebrating 50 years in 2025, provides a cardboard contribution box. A booklet called "Stories of Hope" providing information about this year's guests.



GAYT participants will learn more about Victoria Sirois, who helped create Asylum Pride House (APH) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

This nonprofit organization "supports LGBTQ+ asylum seekers through transitional housing and case management services" out of a five-bedroom house. The organization's clients have "successfully obtained work authorization, jobs, independent housing, and social support, transitioning out of the APH house."

In Haiti, Katia Bonté is the coordinator for Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés (GARR), where she assists Haitians who have tried to find a better life across the border in the Dominican Republic but may have been imprisoned, tortured, and forcibly displaced back to Haiti. GARR provides shelter, clothes, sanitary kits and "also offers support to help migrants process the trauma of their experiences."

The UUSC Partner Team at Unity Church will be distributing boxes through Religious Education programs and in Parish Hall after services during November.

Join us in renewing our congregation's connection to this vital service committee and acting on our values here at home and throughout the world.

[Visit UUSC's Guest at Your Table webpage to learn more!](#)

Youth at Work

Pauline Eichten, Archives Team

We have many snapshots, unfortunately most have little, if any, information. While going through part of the pictures we pulled a couple we wanted to share. Do you know any of the people pictured? If you can share anything else about these pictures, please let us know! Send us an email at archives@unityunitarian.org.



Selling donuts, ca 2001.



Youth work project, painting classrooms, ca 2002. Very creative use of trash bags as protective covering!

Unity's Archives Team is Pauline Eichten, Louise Merriam, Carol Miller, Betsy Moore, and Deb Woodburn. Learn more about their work and Unity's collection at the Minnesota Historical Society by visiting their webpage at unityunitarian.org/unity-church-history.html.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Come, Join Us

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

I make contact with my sisters nearly every day. There is a caveat to that — by “contact” I mean there are multiple text and messenger strings we all follow and contribute to, with reasonable consistency. This has been going on for the last couple of years, and it can be fun. But if I am honest, this doesn’t make me feel particularly connected to them at

this point in our lives. It seems we are substituting a fairly surface exchange of information for the much deeper closeness we had during all the years we met regularly at my parent’s house before they passed away.

Sigh...

At Tower Club last month, we asked each other about how connected each of us felt generally, and all the kids reported they are well connected to family and friends, and to the news, as well as the worlds they inhabit. I don’t believe them. That is partly because current surveys and analysis strongly suggest that kids, and adults, are feeling the lowest levels of deep connection they have revealed in decades. That and the fact that when we talk about how much of their thoughts, words and actions are centered around “Me” versus “We,” they readily admit that “We” is really hard. “Us” and “Them” are far easier to name and respond to, though “Us” isn’t super reliable.

I suggested that the main reason they are coming to High school group at Unity is because they desire to be part of an “us.” They don’t argue against that, but still most want to be pretty careful of what they mean by “us.” A group of friends? 15–18-year-olds? Unitarian Universalists? How can I feel really connected to anyone if we don’t know who we are?

My sisters and I spend a lot of time when we are physically together talking about our family’s past. Too much, my wife often says. But we do this to continually establish our common roots, recalling the history that connects us. We saw our immigrant ancestors doing this every time they gathered. Recognizing the roots that connected them, and then us, was very comforting — it made all feel safe and strong, like we belonged. But my spouse does not get the same benefit; in fact, she feels it is unwelcoming and off putting. At great cost I will admit, she is right.

So, Tower Club, you are largely connected because of your past in religious education, and through the trauma and glory of going through the Coming of Age program. Though you were encouraged to freely disagree with each other, and even with your parents, you were all asked and expected to share what you believe, and what you feel, and what vexes you. And then you had to listen. You all have that in common. As UUs we are connected by that root system, one that seeks to go deep, one that is nourishing, one that is demanding. But ultimately also unifying and capable of including an ever expanding “Us.”

Christmas Pageant

Save these dates!

- Pageant cast and children’s choir registration runs November 16–December 5
- Casting completed and posted online by December 8 (all who register will have a role)
- Costume fitting is December 14
- Rehearsal is Tuesday, December 23, 1:00–4:00 p.m.
- Pageant performances are Wednesday, December 24, 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. Cast and choirs should arrive by 3:45 p.m. and will be done by 6:30 p.m.

If you are interested in learning more about getting involved with the pageant, please contact Pageant Director Kelley Loughrey at kelleyloughrey@comcast.net or text/call 763-607-7520. This includes all behind the scenes work including lighting, props, prompters, assistant director, and costume designers. You do not need to be a parent or pageant alum — all are welcome!

Youth Musical

The Youth Musical is a unique production created each year for the congregation of Unity Church.

All middle school kids (grades 6, 7 and 8) are invited to audition, and everyone who auditions will get a part. Auditions are Sunday, January 8, 2026.

Rehearsals will be held Sundays, 1:30–3:30 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00–8:30 p.m. Performances are March 19, 20 and 21, 2026.

Learn more at an informational meeting on Wednesday, December 3, at 7:10 p.m., in Anderson Library or Sunday, December 7, at 10:30 a.m., in the Gannett Room. Please email unityyouthmusical@gmail.com with questions.

Childcare for Church Events

Unity Church offers childcare for church-wide events, free of charge. Nursery care is consistently provided for every Sunday service and Wellspring Wednesday program — 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. Katrina Nichols, Unity’s Nursery Coordinator, will contact you to confirm the reservation.

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

One of the first things that comes to mind when I think of interconnected roots is my relationship to

cardenche singing and the role it has played in my life here in Minnesota. This musical genre is deeply connected to the place I am from and to my background, and it is a form of singing that I have shared in academic, performance, and informal settings. Cardenche singing has been on my mind recently because, on November 1, a cohort of Mexican singers who love this tradition will be coming to the Twin Cities. They'll be staying in the homes of various members of our music ministry and performing a program of cardenche songs side by side with Border CrosSing.

Cardenche singing is a genre of unaccompanied polyphonic singing from the Comarca Lagunera, a region in northern Mexico located at the intersection of the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango not far from where I grew up. There is nothing quite like it in the world and, as far as I know, it is the only endemic musical style in Latin America that is both polyphonic (featuring multiple musical lines at once) and entirely unaccompanied by instruments. The word cardenche refers to a type of cactus that grows in this region, a particularly vicious cholla cactus. The cardenche has hooked barbs that make it very painful to handle, as they tear the flesh when removed. In the same way, cardenche songs are meant to be “ripped out” of the body.

The essence of cardenche singing lies in expressing the extreme emotion of the text through vocal tone and range. Common themes include grief, death, and lost love. Cardenche songs are transmitted through oral tradition and are typically sung by people sitting or standing very close together, with long pauses between

each phrase. They are sung in three or four voice parts, each with its own role and character: the principal, contralta, and arrastre. The contralta sings in the highest register in three-part cardenche. The best contralta singers fully commit emotionally while navigating the extreme high notes with a full-bodied tone that pierces the soul — the contralta is the “thorn” of the cardenche cactus. In most songs, the contralta provides harmony. The fundamental is usually the lead voice, determining the key and general tempo, and always beginning each phrase, with the other voices joining afterward. The arrastre is the lowest part in the harmony, dragging slightly behind the melody and sliding from pitch to pitch. This dragging quality gives cardenche its distinctive sound. The arrastre must remain coordinated with the lead voice while providing a strong foundation that allows the higher voices to move freely. Arrastre singers are often low basses or altos who sing with a rough, guttural tone—hence this voice is often nicknamed the *marrana* (Spanish for “pig”).

Very few people today know or sing in the cardenche tradition, and for some time it was on the verge of disappearing entirely. Los Cardencheros de Sapioriz, a group based in the town of Sapioriz, Durango, made it their mission to teach this genre to a new generation. They toured the world and traveled throughout Mexico to perform and teach the style — both in its traditional form and through a developing “choral style” of cardenche created in collaboration with several Mexican choir directors. Border CrosSing is one of the choirs that has championed this choral form of canto cardenche, alongside Coro Acardenchado, a group based in Mexico City led by conductor Juan Pablo Villa.

Nearly ten years ago, I led my students at the University of Minnesota in a large community singing event

featuring cardenche songs. After the event, an audience member approached me in tears. He shared that he had lived in Minnesota for over forty years, having emigrated from Mexico in his twenties, and that never in his wildest dreams did he imagine he'd hear these songs again. His name was Gilberto, and we became close friends. In the following years, he reached out to Juan Pablo Villa in Mexico to plan a collaboration between our ensembles. Gilberto passed away several years ago, but his efforts have led to the collaboration between Coro Acardenchado and Border CrosSing on November 1. We will open this year's Día de los Muertos Festival at The Hook and Ladder, and I hope to see many folks from Unity there!

Border CrosSing

Details at: bordercrossingmn.org

Festival De Las Calaveras
Saturday, November 1

The Hook and Ladder Theater

Border CrosSing artists, with Coro Acardenchado and Juan Pablo Villa, will perform Canto Cardenche songs arranged by Ahmed Anzaldúa as part of the festival.

Voces de las Américas
Saturday, November 8
Long Lake, MN

Multi-choir celebration with Coro Argentino de Minnesota, Cappella Sur, Border CrosSing, and Kuyayki Perú dancers. Free!

One Voice Mixed Chorus

Protest Lines

Saturday, November 15

Tickets: onevoicemn.org

Protest Lines explores the role of music as a form of resistance and a testament to human resilience.



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
Mary Baremore, Chair, Board of Trustees

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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Coffee Team Training

Sunday, November 9 | 1:00 p.m.
Parish Hall

Join Heidi Birkholz on November 9 to learn more about the kitchen, specifically during Coffee Hour.



We are looking for leaders to keep the coffee flowing, the cream pitcher full and to do a few dishes. A light lunch will be served! If you have questions, please email Heidi at heidi@unityunitarian.org.

Calling all Truckers

Do you have a truck or trailer or both?



Occasionally Unity has a need for a truck to pick up or deliver items. If you would like to be on the Unity Truckers list, please email Heidi at heidi@unityunitarian.org.

In The Justice Database

[Project Home New Location](#)

Unity Church has been working with Project Home for many, many years, but did you know that they have a beautiful new and permanent location?

With help from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and other sources, Interfaith Action, of which Project Home is a part, is now located in the previous Best Western Plus hotel in Bandana Square. Take a look and learn more about how you can connect to the work of housing justice in our community.



Red Cross Blood Drive

WITHOUT A, B AND O,
WE CAN'T SAVE
ANYBODY



Give blood. #MissingType

Monday, December 1
9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. | Parish Hall

For an appointment visit RedCrossBlood.org or call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

We are looking for six volunteers to check in donors and monitor the canteen during our blood drive on Monday, December 1. Available shifts are 8:30-11:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and 1:00-3:00 p.m. If you are interested, please contact Heidi Birkholz at heidi@unityunitarian.org.