



Incarnation

The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community. We explore each theme in worship and in our newsletter; in covenant groups, and religious education; and in our community outreach ministries, our literary journal and programs, and many other opportunities.

"I sing the body electric," begins Walt Whitman, in his iconic poem of the same name. I remember when I first found the poem as a teenager, gleeful, almost ecstatic to find someone who so clearly got it—got how glorious, how magical, how *divine* the body is. In "I Sing the Body Electric," Whitman contends that the body "balks account" and is inseparable from the soul.

Our Unitarian and Universalist Christian roots understood Jesus as the incarnation of God, and celebrated Christmas as the moment God was born on earth in the human flesh of baby Jesus. Our Unitarian heritage parted ways from this theological understanding of Christmas, but many UU churches still celebrate Christmas, including ours. Unity Church is no longer a Christian church (although there are Christian members), and yet Christmas is still one of our biggest holiday celebrations. This month, we will have hymns about Jesus, a Christmas pageant re-enacting scenes from the Bible, and no less than five Christmas Eve services. What meaning does all this activity point to? What are we longing for?

The Western Christian church begins waiting for God's incarnation four Sundays before Christmas Day on Advent Sunday. The entire month is then spent waiting in the dark and quiet for the miracle of birth. As Unitarian Universalists, we might understand Christmas in light of our theology that every child born is one more redeemer,

and in the context of celebrating the divine light incarnating in every human being. We might understand our own process of Advent as waiting to move from our heads into our hearts or to move more fully into divinity of our own body.

Unitarian Universalists often struggle with this move from head to heart, this move into our bodies. We herald ourselves as the faith of reason, and in Western culture reason—thought—is often placed in a false dichotomy with the body and its heart- and feeling-based ways of knowing. I have heard many UUs say they "live too much in their heads" or "worship from the neck up."

Simultaneously, Unitarians have a tradition of celebrating the body and resisting the flesh-shaming Christian tradition. William Ellery Channing's *Likeness to God* developed the idea that humans are good, and made in the image of God, which meant the body was made in God's image. We came to understand the body, and pleasure, as positives and pushed against the traditional Christian formulation of the body as sinful and depraved. Our OWL (Our Whole Lives) program on human sexuality is an outgrowth of this theology.

How do we balance celebration of reason with celebration of the body? Might we see our church's tradition of waiting and longing for Christmas, despite theological misgivings about God incarnate, as a longing for divine

incarnation in our own bodies? Could we see it as a longing to see the immaterial in the material world? Or are we longing for something fixed, a stable tradition, within our dynamic, open, fluid, and constantly changing faith? Might the body—especially as it begins in the messiness of a baby—be the place where this desire for the concrete, the material, is balanced with the dynamism and wonder of growth and change?

Written by Jennifer Nordstrom with help from the theme team: K.P. Hong, Karen Van Fossan, Janne Eller-Isaacs, and Rob Eller-Isaacs

Incarnation Resources

Books

Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman

The Gospel According to Jesus Christ by Jose Saramago

Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal by Christopher Moore

Movies

Children of Men (2006) In 2027, in a chaotic world in which women have become somehow infertile, a former activist agrees to help transport a miraculously pregnant woman to a sanctuary at sea.

Miracle on 34th Street (1947) The story of a department store Santa Claus that claims to be the real Santa.

Just Words



Among my favorite holiday readings is "The Nicest Gifts I Ever Got" by our dear departed colleague, Clarke Dewey Wells. Clarke offers a list of gifts. "While I remember a Daniel Boone hat and a magician set with special affection, the nicest gifts I ever got are in quite another category." He goes on to share a list of far less tangible but far more lasting gifts. Here are a few such gifts I've received over the years:

- My choir director who, when I was 11 and having a terribly difficult year, asked me to be his assistant
- A yoga teacher I met when I was 17 who taught me that my body is a temple
- An older colleague who asked me to consider a church near his so he could help to guide my early years in ministry
- A woman (now my wife and partner in ministry) who chased me down when I was scared to death and caught me, tamed me, and gave me this beautiful life
- The interns who have helped me grow into a teacher
- The border/Aussie sisters I didn't want at all that fill my days with joy
- The Unity trustees, the staff and so many others who hold this place close to their hearts and love it as much as we do

May I suggest you take some time before the Child comes to make a list of the nicest gifts you ever got. It will help you to remember what really matters most. Clarke Wells goes on to say: "The nicest gifts people have given me have been enabling, confirming gifts, bestowing understanding and self-esteem, help in time of trouble and delight for ordinary days."

As always,
Rob

Committed Couples Class

The path of being in a committed relationship is a demanding path full of all kinds of challenges and opportunities. The goal of the committed couple's class is to enhance relationships no matter what state they are in.

People in a committed partnership sometimes believe that their issues are unique. Often that isn't the case and as couples share, camaraderie and understanding increase.

The committed couple's class is intended to promote healthy and productive conversations about our relationships. Participants are often amazed at how often they laugh at themselves as other couples share the same story.

Committed Couples is a class designed to support all couples who are committed to one another. We cover issues like finances, spirituality, the impact of family of origin issues, parenting, intimacy and conflict. We share and work in small groups and as couples. Each creates a relationship vision together which serves as a foundation for the work we do. If you have questions, please contact Janne at the Church Office.

Led by Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, the Committed Couples class will be held Thursday evenings, January 30; February 6, 20, 27; and March 6, 13, 20, from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. Registration is free for pledging members of Unity Church and \$110 for non-pledging friends. To register, please contact Marcy Mann-Anderson by email at marcy@unityunitarian.org or by phone at 651-228-1456 x110.

Contact Christy Randall by email at christy@unityunitarian.org at the Church Office by Sunday, January 19, to request childcare.

December Parish Hall Artists

Fiber Artists Study Group (FASG): *Voices of the Tribe*

Voices of the Tribe is a series of mixed media fiber art works by members of the A tribe, as defined by Seth Godin, is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader and connected to an idea. The exhibition is the voice of the FASG tribe — visual definitions of words chosen by each artist. Collectively, the works speak to the connection of the tribe — to each other, to the tribe, and to the community.

Fiber art is the main genre of the exhibition employing diverse materials, including but not limited to wool and silk roving, paper, fabric — commercial and hand-dyed, thread, photographs, printing ink, and dye.

The techniques used by the members are equally diverse, many employing several in one work in order to achieve their full "voice." Techniques include: wet felting and needle felting, painting and fabric surface design, shibori hand-dyeing, discharge of color, natural eco-dyeing, hand and machine stitching, photographic manipulation, and weaving.

The artists will be on hand to answer questions and to talk about their work between the 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. worship services on Sunday, December 8.

FASG members: Dawn Carlson Conn, Elna Goodspeed, Carri Hammett, Kristen Hoelscher-Schacker, Joan Kloiber, Dina O'Sullivan, Joan Parsons, Doris Staub Petrie, Kathleen Smith, Sheryl Schwyhart

DECEMBER SUNDAY WORSHIP CALENDAR

December Sunday Worship Calendar

Sunday worship services are held at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., and 4:30 p.m. except where noted.

December 1: *Stop! Wait! Go!* — Karen Van Fossan *A Multi-Generational Service*

Children and adults of all ages are invited to this joyful, interactive service. Together, we will celebrate and honor the in-between times, when we anticipate incarnation, waiting between stop and go. Ministerial Intern Karen Van Fossan and worship associate Helen Pohlig will lead us in an all-ages message and optional activity, with support from Director of Religious Education K.P. Hong. Your open heart and curious mind will help us co-create beloved community, even as we find ourselves in in-between times.

December 8: *Diversity and Community* —Michael Cowan
Unitarian Universalists are known for wholehearted, generous embrace of diversity. Humans give ultimate being many names: Yaweh, ground of being, Tao, God, web of life, energy, Allah, Great Spirit, love. Each name bears with it a world view and way of life intended to keep those who use it in right relationship to what is being named. The unity of most communities of faith is based on sharing a single name and one set of symbols for the ultimate, and the world view and way of life that come with them. "God is the anchor symbol for a whole world view and way of life." When all the names of God are welcome in a community, is there a whole that arises from these many names? What does a faithful community look like when its belief is polycentric? See back cover for details about a community forum offered by Michael Cowan.

December 15: *This is My Body* —Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs
As our waiting deepens we turn toward Mary and all the many mothers of God who help us spin spirit, mind and body into one. Rob will be joined by worship associate Bailey Webster.

December 22: *We Hear You Knocking* • Family Sunday
The church family will gather to remember a homeless couple, he a humble carpenter, she on the verge of giving birth. The journey was long. The labor pains were coming closer together. Every door was closed to them. Is our door open? Come enter into the Las Posadas tradition as we celebrate the child on the way. The ministers will be joined by Director of Religious Education K.P. Hong.

December 29: One service only at 10:00 a.m.
Near to the Brokenhearted — Jennifer Nordstrom
For people who have been abused or traumatized, their own bodies can be the most dangerous place to be. The body can be a dangerous place when facing or resisting violence, and it can be a dangerous place to sit quietly and be present. But the body can also hold the ticket to deep healing. How can we be encouraged to take the risk of healing in places where innocence has been slaughtered? Hallman Ministerial Intern Jennifer Nordstrom and worship associate Ray Wiedmeyer will explore where the brokenhearted could find comfort.

December Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, thirty percent of the offering goes to support the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to the chosen community non-profit recipient. Please make checks payable to Unity Church.

December 1: SPIN: Saint Paul Interfaith Network
SPIN is an informal network hosted by the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches. SPIN is a member of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) and the Twin Cities Interfaith Network. SPIN values interfaith dialogue and networking as well dialogue within faith traditions on ways to build relationships and understanding across lines of different religious traditions, theologies and values.

December 8: Circle of Peace
Circle of Peace is a neighborhood organization of peacemakers committed to breaking the cycle of inner city youth violence. The circle impacts the community by creating different and more positive relationships with youth in trouble, parents, and other city and community members. Youth from Boy's Totem Town and other local residential facilities, parents, grandparents, police officers, probation officers, city officials and community members have all attended the circle since it began over three years ago. Members of Unity's Restorative and Racial Justice Teams, along with other congregants, help provide the dinner hour meals for the Circle of Peace that meets at Unity Church each Monday night.

December 15: Beacon Interfaith Housing
Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative is in the process of building and operating a 44-unit supportive housing development called Prior Crossing, located at 1949 University Avenue, for youth transitioning out of homelessness in Ramsey County. This project will provide young adults with a place to begin healing from past traumas, create community, and build the needed skills to live stable, independent lives. The Unity Church Affordable Housing Outreach Ministry team is working in collaboration with the development of Prior Crossing.

December 22: Heart of the Beast Puppet Theater
The Heart of the Beast Puppet Theatre provides community theatre, produces original plays and commissioned spectacles, and teaches workshops in mask making and peacemaking throughout the Twin Cities area. Many Unity Church children and adults have participated in performances, puppet making workshops and the parade.

December 29: AGAPE High School
AGAPE (Adolescent Girls and Parenting Education) High School of the St. Paul Public Schools offers a secondary educational program to teens who are pregnant and/or parenting. This small learning community offers numerous courses, as well as intervention services to help students address other barriers to educational success. Those services include social, emotional, and physical health services or referrals, English language learner and special education support.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Board of Trustees

From Deborah Carter McCoy, Secretary



Last week I enjoyed lunch with an older gentleman I know only as an acquaintance through work. I called him with the invitation of lunch because I so enjoy his mind. He is an attorney and I like having conversations with analytical people. He is well-read and well-traveled. Thoughtful. Insightful.

Curious. He and I got to talking about openness and how is it that we become able to see beyond our perceptions so that we are delighted by the unexpected. Or, we don't and we stay closed until something rattles us open to experience delight. Or, we just never see the world as a place brimming with the possibility of delight.

When Marg Walker approached me about service as Secretary for the board my initial response was closed. As Marg and I talked, she shared some observations she had made of me and my strengths and interests. The conversation wound around as conversations so often do and by the end I was intrigued by the opportunity she had asked me to consider. By accepting the nomination I was able to see the role in a way that was greater than my perception of the work. I was open to the unexpected.

Recently, Unity's Coordinator of Communications, Martha Tilton, graciously shared an hour brainstorming communication ideas. My list is growing, but I am especially interested in de-mystifying the role of the board in the life of this vibrant, growing and multi-generational congregation. As a starting place, I encourage you to visit the Board of Trustees page (www.unityunitarian.org/board-of-trustees.html) in the Governance section of the website. On this page you will find past meeting minutes, policy documents, annual congregational survey results and the faces, names and contact information for your board.

The Board of Trustees' name tags sport red ribbons. I hope you'll feel comfortable saying, "Hi." Please consider asking questions about the board's work on your behalf. Offer suggestions about additional ways to communicate our work with you. And, maybe share a story of a time when you were open to an unexpected delight.

Make a year-end gift to Unity Church!

As we come to the close of 2013, we look back with tremendous gratitude for the gift of community and the new possibilities that we witness each day. One tradition that we hope might continue during this busy season of giving is the tradition of year-end gifts to the church. If such a gift is possible for you, we invite you to make one now. Donations are gratefully accepted online at <http://bit.ly/UnityYearEnd> or by contacting Barbara Hubbard at barbarah@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x116.

2014 Pledge Drive Update: Hip! Hip! Hurray!

From Mary Baremore, Pledge Team



It is our pleasure to announce the results of this year's Operating Pledge Drive. As of November 13, 2014, we took in pledges totaling \$1,192,035 from 657 pledging households, 74 of which are new pledges. We are within \$14,000 of our \$1.2 million budget goal. The membership unanimously

approved the budget for 2014 at the annual meeting on November 16. This is very exciting news!

As a pledge team, we looked at several factors that helped determine the success of this year's pledge. First, we believe the new building has had a positive influence on people. Refreshing a space by upgrading infrastructure and attending to beauty gives us and people in our community the sense that we are not stagnating, that what happens within our walls is reflected by our walls. Ours is a vibrant and creative community. The more we reflect that in our space, the more excited we become in it. It's infectious.

Second, Unity's Director of Congregational Life, Lisa Friedman, conducts her Pathways to Membership classes in such a way that prospective members find depth and meaning as they are walking in the door, not after months or years of attending church. Stories tell of how long-time members have attended her classes as a refresher and have found her teaching rich and thorough. She's a quiet inspiration to us and has a vital role in the life of our church.

Third, we, the Pledge Team, set a goal. A tight goal. October 31. We said, "Make it so." You stepped up. You have no one to thank and cheer on but yourselves. It was an awesome outpouring of support and generosity, which comes on the heels of a very robust capital campaign. Thank you!

Many of you made a three-year sustaining pledge that will expire at the end of 2014. Next year's pledge team is already considering that sustaining pledge idea, using the public radio and television models of sustained pledging. Watch for details regarding this toward the end of summer 2014.

As I transition off the pledge team, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to serve. Raising money is not always easy, but you've made it a little easier. We all know how important it is. I'd like to thank the members of the teams I served on over the three years, and especially Barbara Hubbard, who is the essential glue that holds all of us together with her wisdom and attention to detail. I'd also like to acknowledge all those who have come before us to help raise the money necessary to keep our church alive and well.

See you in the pews!

MINISTERIAL INTERNS

Jennifer Nordstrom

2013-14 Hallman Ministerial Intern



This time of year can be a paradox: holidays can bring love and connection with family and friends, as well as anxiety, conflict, distance or loneliness. The increasing hours of dark invite quiet while the bustle of the holidays keeps us busy. The holidays focus on relationship while intense consumerism can increase alienation. I know I find myself struggling to straddle multiple obligations and worlds at once, even as my soul yearns for more meaning and connection. I am trying to speed up while simultaneously hearing the call to slow down.

My family wrestled with “holiday fatigue” for years. We love each other deeply, but we found ourselves exhausted, stressed out, and rushing around at the last minute to get everything done. We spent less time together and were more irritable during the holidays than we wanted to be. We wanted less stuff in our holidays in order to have more of each other. One year, I nervously wondered if we might try skipping gifts that year and just spend more time together. My parents heaved a sigh of relief and said, “We were just holding on to that tradition because we thought it mattered to you kids.” I approached my sister, who is the tradition-keeper of the family, with even more trepidation. She surprised me by saying something similar, and was both relieved and excited to have that piece of the season off her plate. We spent more time together that year, and laughed and sang and cooked together. We didn’t miss it, and have not put it back.

People celebrate and value the holiday traditions in so many ways. I am not suggesting anyone stop doing something that feeds their spirit. But if you feel overwhelmed, run down, or exhausted this season, then you might want to examine what is feeding you—and what is not. You might be surprised to discover that one or two holiday obligations are not feeding the people around you, either, and you can cut them out. Ignore the “shoulds” and pay attention to how different traditions make you feel. Consider cutting the ones that start to make you feel anxious, irritable, or tired.

If that feels scary or guilt-inducing, start by focusing on the traditions that make you feel alive, and give yourself the gift of spending extra time on those things this year. Do the soul-feeding stuff first, and do it for longer. For my family, this was cooking, conversing, and game-playing. We started spending most of our holiday time together doing the stuff we love. This year, remember what you really want to celebrate, and cultivate more of that in your life by giving your time and attention to it. The holidays are supposed to shore up our spirits in the darkest part of the year and bolster us for the winter. May they serve you this year.

Jennifer Nordstrom can be reached by email at jennifer@unityunitarian.org and by phone at 651-228-1456 x129.

Karen Van Fossan

2013-15 Ministerial Intern



Every year of my life, my mother declares, “Happy Birthday!” on the anniversary of the precise minute I was born. It used to be in person; now it’s almost always by phone. At some point, I developed my own tradition. I respond, “Happy Birthday to you, Mom!”

According to the calendar, my birthday is in the last days of September, hers at the end of February. We don’t share a literal birthday. Still, though I could be as cheeky as any other kid, my reply wasn’t meant to be sass. It also didn’t begin with much intention; I found myself saying it and then trying to understand what I’d said.

My mother was born, incarnated, as a mother (my mother) when I was born, incarnated, as her child. My life gave her motherhood, just as much as my mother gave me life. This is true, as well, for my dad.

I wonder sometimes, at what point did I become a parent? My child, now age 20, was 15 when I met her. She promptly became my foster daughter and will be all her life. Her life makes me a mother, but did her birth? If Michaela were to tell me, “Happy birthday to you, Momma K!” every year on her birthday, would such words even make sense?

I wanted to be a parent for a long time. I visited adoption sites, cared for other children, even gathered a couple items I planned to give my some-day child. Much has changed in my life in the past few years; entering seminary may well be one of the smaller changes. And yet somewhere in these years I was born as a mom.

Was it the first night Michaela slept safely in my home, in the room with the bright pink walls she so admired? Or that day at juvenile court, when we both were so angry and scared? When I tucked her into my car after oral surgery?

Did I become her mom when she looked at me over the desk and said, “I want you to be my mom”?

Or maybe the days before, when I started my application for foster parenthood?

I cannot point precisely to the minute, or even the day. And yet Michaela’s life gives my life incarnation. Somewhere between the dawn of life and its steady forward dance, between my mother and my daughter, I was born.

Karen Van Fossan can be reached at karenv@unityunitarian.org and 651-228-1456 x109. Please feel free to keep sending her limericks, haikus, and other writings. They are a joy.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Welcome Words

As I write, my family is preparing for our first Thanksgiving – the first time Thanksgiving and Hanukkah have overlapped since 1888. The holiday season is like that – a mix of the expected annual traditions, yet always with a spark of something new. As we enter into this season together, may we remind each other to stay open to the new and ready for wonder. Sometimes the candles we light do shine upon us with blessing longer and brighter than we could have ever imagined. Sometimes a line from an old carol sings out a much-needed truth that brings us hope and peace. Sometimes the new faces at our holiday tables strengthen the bonds of kinship among us all. May it be so for each of us in this season of celebration and see you in church!

Rev. Lisa Friedman
Director of Congregational Life

Pathway to Membership Classes

Unity Church offers a series of three classes for visitors who are exploring Unity as a spiritual home. Sign up at the Welcome Table on Sundays or contact Rev. Lisa Friedman at 651-228-1456 x107 or lisa@unityunitarian.org. She is also happy to meet with you to answer questions and to welcome you into the congregation. Childcare is available by contacting Christy Randall at 651-228-1456 x127 or christy@unityunitarian.org at least one week in advance.

Welcome to Unity: Our Class for Newcomers
Sunday, December 15: 10:15–11:30 a.m. ~ also offered ~ **Wednesday, January 15: 7:15–8:30 p.m.**

If you have been visiting and would like to find out more about Unitarian Universalism and our congregation, we invite you to join us for a *Welcome to Unity* class.

Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Exploration
Three night series: Thursday, January 16, 23, 30
6:30-8:30 p.m. (includes light supper all three nights)
~ also offered ~ **Saturday, February 22: 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. (includes potluck lunch)**

In this class, we will have an opportunity to share part of our religious journey, to take a more in depth look at the history of Unity Church, to discuss the expectations and benefits of membership, and get to know the programs and ministries of the congregation.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church
Wednesday, January 29: 7:15-8:30 p.m. ~ also offered ~ **Wednesday March 26: 7:15-9:00 p.m.**

This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. The class concludes with a celebration ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church!

Ongoing Groups at Unity Church

These groups are open to all members and friends of Unity Church. If you are looking to connect with a group, please contact the person listed below, visit the church website at www.unityunitarian.org for meeting information, or call the church office at 651-228-1456.

A New Look at the Bible: Second Thursday of the month (December 12) at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade at 651-771-7528.

Afterthoughts: This group meets after the 9:00 a.m. service. Contact: Paul Gade at 651-771-7528 for more information.

Caregivers Group: An informal support group for caregivers. Third Thursday of the month (December 19) from Noon–2:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org for more information.

Evergreen Quilters: Second Tuesday of the month (December 10) from 7:00-9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month (December 28) from 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Contact: Peggy Wright at 651-698-2760 for more information.

Job Transitions/Networking Group: Every Monday at 9:00 a.m. in the Anderson Library. Contact Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org for more information.

Living With Grief Group: A group for people living with grief and loss. Third Tuesday of the month (December 17) from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org for more information.

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, December 2, 16, and 30, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact: Phil Morton at 952-934-3578 for more information.

Unitots!: A drop-in playgroup for families (parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles) with kids through preschool age. Every Monday, from 9:30 a.m.-noon, in the nursery. Contact Christy Randall at christy@unityunitarian.org for more information.

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month from 7:00-8:30 p.m. The book they will be discussing on December 10 is *Behind the Kitchen Door* by Saru Jayaraman. The book they will be discussing on January 14 is *Orphan Masters Son* by Jon Adam Johnson. Contact Jack Hawthorne at jack.hawthorne@comcast.net for more information.

Unity Bridge Club: Friday, December 6, at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Priscilla Swartz at 651-454-3209.

Women's Retirement Group: Second and Fourth Thursday of the month (December 12 and NO MEETING December 26) from 1:00-3:00 p.m. On December 12, there will be a lunch outing to the American Swedish Institute. Contact Leah Doherty at doher001@umn.edu.

Zen Meditation: Find renewal and grounding. Tuesdays from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m., in the Ames Chapel. Contact Ken Ford at kford5@comcast.net.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE / WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Every Day Enjoyable Parenting

Parents of toddlers to teens are invited to participate in five sessions (Wednesdays, January 15-February 12, 2014) on the topic of good parent-child relationships. No miracles are guaranteed but the discussion and group support holds promise for enhanced interactions. All who enroll by January 6 will receive a free copy of the research-based book, *The 10 Best Principles of Good Parenting* by internationally acclaimed psychologist, Laurence Steinberg. Marty Rossmann, Unity member and Professor Emerita of Family Education at the University of Minnesota, will guide the sessions. Sign up on Unity's website or by emailing rossm001@umn.edu. Childcare will be available.

Sign up for Group Spiritual Direction

Want to join other Unity members in a contemplative spiritual direction group? Spiritual director Sarah Cledwyn will be facilitating small groups that will be forming through the month of December to begin monthly meetings in January. An evening group will meet on the third Thursday of the month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. A daytime group will meet on the first Monday of each month from 10:00 a.m.-noon. Groups will run through June and will cost \$30 per session for six sessions. Together we will support each other's work to keep our balance and to live into integrity, service and joy. If you have questions about spiritual direction, or the forming groups, please contact Sarah at sarahcledwyn@gmail.com or 651-699-9948. You can sign up on Unity's web site or Sarah will also be available in the Parish Hall to answer questions on Sunday, December 1, and 8.

The Gathering

6th Annual Unity Church Women's Retreat Saturday, January 25, 2014

The Gathering is a one-day women's spiritual retreat. This year's theme is "Mind/Body/Spirit." Join us in an opportunity to reflect on the wholeness of our lives - through worship, song, movement, writing, drumming, conversation, and contemplation. Breakfast and lunch will be provided, as will opportunities for massage and spiritual direction. Registration will be available on our website and in the Parish Hall beginning on Sunday, January 5.

Be a Host for Sources Suppers in February

In the Sources Supper tradition, during the week of February 8-15, 2014, we will come together to tell the story of Unitarian Universalism and apply it to our lives today. There are two options to participate in this opportunity for community building and spiritual deepening: in one another's homes on February 8 and 15, and at the church on February 8. If you would like to be a host for a Sources Supper in your home for 6-10 people on either the 8th or the 15th, please let Lisa Friedman know at lisa@unityunitarian.org. To read about the origins of the Sources Supper and the key events covered, go to www.SourcesSupper.org.

Wellspring Wednesday

Please note! Wellspring Wednesday will be on winter break from December 11 through January 1 and will resume on January 8.

Wellspring Wednesday is a multi-generational opportunity to gather together midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m., followed by worship at 6:45 p.m., and an evening of rich programming beginning at 7:10 p.m. All are welcome. Childcare is available and you do not have to sign up in advance.

Dinner: The cost for dinner is: \$7/adult, \$4/child ages 5 to 12, \$2/child ages 2 to 4, and \$20/family, and can be paid by cash or check. (Children under the age of 24 months are free.) Reservations for dinner are not required. Financial assistance is available to cover the cost of dinners; contact Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x107.

December 4

Dinner menu: Taco bar! This dinner is planned, cooked, and served by Unity's Tween Youth Group. This dinner is offered free-of-charge to anyone bringing at least two non-perishable food donations. All of the money and food collected from tonight's meal will be given to Sharing Korner Food Shelf.

Project Vote Smart: An Alternative to Cynicism

Has political deadlock and partisan nastiness in our government made you discouraged and apathetic? Do you believe that our democracy is at risk but feel helpless about what to do? Doing nothing is harmful morally and spiritually. Project Vote Smart offers an opportunity to join others sharing free accurate nonpartisan information to voters nationwide. Our democracy depends on citizens having the facts they need to see through the hype, negative campaigning and misinformation surrounding elections. Becoming part of this effort is an alternative to cynicism as Gary Wederspahn discovered when he volunteered with them this summer. Learn how he regained a sense of hope and optimism. Gary Wederspahn is a former Peace Corps Director, longtime UU, and an activist in progressive causes. He is also a speaker and writer on cross-cultural understanding and diversity.

Incarnation: This Embodied Life

Open Page Writing Session with Karen Hering
Free, but RSVP to karen@unityunitarian.org required.
See page 11 for details.

Light the Lights of Hanukkah

Tonight is the 7th night of the 8-day Jewish observance of Hanukkah. Join Rev. Lisa Friedman and Jackie Smith as they celebrate the story of the miracle of the oil, play the dreidel game, and learn how some Unity families honor this holiday in their homes. Children and families are welcome to attend together!

New Family Religious Education Orientation

Beloved Conversations 8 (Pre-registration required)



Holiday Worship Information

Saturday, December 21

Winter Solstice Celebration • 7:30 p.m. • Parish Hall

Come join us for a contemplative, family-friendly, Celtic-inspired ritual to mark the turning of the year as the darkness gives way to the growing light. This participatory ritual will include chanting, meditation, candle-lighting, singing, and cauldron jumping. Kids—bring animal masks and hand percussion (rattles, shakers, bells)! If you would like to participate as a ritual leader or if you have questions, please contact Katy Taylor at katy@thewingedheart.net or 651-291-8551.

Sunday, December 22 • Family Sunday

We Hear You Knocking

The church family will gather to remember a homeless couple, he a humble carpenter, she on the verge of giving birth. The journey was long. The labor pains were coming closer together. Every door was closed to them. Is our door open? Come enter into the Las Posadas tradition as we celebrate the child on the way. The ministers will be joined by Director of Religious Education K.P. Hong.

Tuesday, December 24

Find A Stillness • 10:00 a.m.

In the full rush of Christmas Eve morning we will gather in the quiet of Ames Chapel. There will be extended periods of silence to provide time for relief and contemplation. The service will include an invitation to join in communion.

Christmas Pageant • 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.

Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs narrate the story of the nativity as Unity Church's children and youth act out the story in the Sanctuary. Families with children age three and under are encouraged to attend the 4:00 p.m. service.

Christmas by Candlelight: Family Lessons and Carols • 7:00 p.m.

Join worship leaders K.P. Hong, and Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs as we retell the Christmas story and celebrate the promise of peace within. This is a service for the entire family, with hymns and homilies that children and adults will enjoy. Nursery care available for infants and toddlers.

Christmas by Candlelight: Lessons and Carols • 10:00 p.m.

Join worship leaders K.P. Hong, and Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs as we retell the Christmas story and celebrate the promise of peace within.

Sunday, December 29 • One service only at 10:00 a.m.

Near to the Brokenhearted — Jennifer Nordstrom

For people who have been abused or traumatized, their own bodies can be the most dangerous place to be. The body can be a dangerous place when facing or resisting violence, and it can be a dangerous place to sit quietly and be present. But the body can also hold the ticket to deep healing. How can we be encouraged to take the risk of healing in places where innocence has been slaughtered? Hallman Ministerial Intern Jennifer Nordstrom and worship associate Ray Wiedmeyer will explore where the brokenhearted could find comfort.

Sunday, January 5

Tolling of Bells • 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

We begin each new year with a memorial service for those who have died in the previous year. Everyone will have an opportunity to acknowledge those they've loved and lost.

Christmas Pageant and Pageant Choirs

All families with children and youth who are or have been recently enrolled in Religious Education are invited to participate in the annual Unity Church Christmas pageant.

Pageant information has been e-mailed to families and registration is available online at <http://www.unityunitarian.org/pageant-registration.html>. Registration must be completed by December 4. For more information about the Pageant contact Kelley Loughrey at kelleyloughrey@comcast.net.

The adult Pageant Choir is open to all. The Children's Pageant Choir is open to children in third through sixth grade. For more information about the Pageant Choirs, please contact Ruth Palmer at the Church Office.

Sunday, December 15

Pageant Costume Fitting

Costume fittings at 10:15 a.m. and 5:45 p.m. in the Whitman Children's Lobby, lower level.

Sunday, December 22

Pageant Adult Choir Rehearsal

10:15–11:00 a.m., Choir Room

Pageant Children's Choir Rehearsal

10:15–11:00 a.m., Foote Room

Monday, December 23

Pageant Dress Rehearsal

12:45–4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 24

Pageant Performances

Pageant services are at 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. Performers and parents should arrive at 3:00 p.m.





Mano a Mano Craft Sale

Are you looking for that perfect holiday gift? Or for a special winter-time treat for yourself? Be sure to stop by the Parish Hall on Sunday, December 1, to peruse the lovely wool, alpaca and cotton handicrafts on sale. Sweaters, scarves, gloves, caps, and more, all made by hand in Bolivia. Proceeds from the sale benefit Mano a Mano (as well as the craftspeople from whom they were originally purchased).

Mitten Tree

Unity's holiday tradition of generosity begins again on December 1. Our little tree will stand in the Whitman Lobby on the lower level, waiting to be decorated with warm hats, gloves, scarves and – yes – mittens! All donated items should be new or like new. Children's winter items will be distributed to area families through Obama Elementary and Jeremiah Program. Adult items will be distributed through Amicus.

Evergreen Quilters Annual Holiday Sale

Sunday, December 8 and 15, after morning services

Evergreen Quilters will offer one-of-a-kind textile gifts for those special people on your list. With a wide variety of choices you're sure to find something you "need." Choices include hand crafted holiday napkins, aprons, hot pan holders, table decorations for entertaining, scarves, pins, jewelry, bags and many more items! All these gifts are made and lovingly donated by Evergreen Quilters and friends. The goal for this sale is to raise more than \$1,500 to help fund Unity's Evergreen partner organizations including Jeremiah Program, Sharing Korner Foodshelf, and The Family Place. If you are a sewer, quilter or crafter you are invited to join Evergreen Quilters. Contact Peggy Wright at 651-698-2760 for more information.

Wreath and Cookie Sales!

Purchase your holiday wreath and treats from our high school youth in support of their pilgrimage to Boston. Wreath and cookie sales start Sunday, December 8, following each service.

"Santa Pause" Free Childcare

Wednesday, December 11 • 6:00-8:30 p.m. • Parish Hall

Unity Junior High Youth and their parents offer their annual gift of time to parents of young children. Sign your child(ren) up for two-and-a-half hours of free holiday fun at church so that you can finish making gifts, planning gatherings or just take a moment's pause during this full season. Dinner, crafts, games and a movie for children ages 3 to 10. Advance sign up required to christy@unityunitarian.org.

Elders Circle Holiday Party!

Tuesday, December 17 • 1:00-2:30 p.m. • Robbins Parlor

Ruth Palmer, Director of Music Ministries, will join us for an afternoon of holiday songs, stories, and refreshments. If you'd like to bring a treat to share, please do, but your presence and voice are gift enough. For questions or to RSVP, contact Hallman Intern Jennifer Nordstrom at 651-228-1456 x129 or jennifer@unityunitarian.org.

Winter Solstice Reflection

Winter solstice occurs this year on December 21 at 11:11 a.m. CT. This is the first day of winter—the shortest day and longest night of the year. Every day thereafter, the days grow longer until summer solstice, when we have the longest day and the shortest night.

But first we have to make it through the winter! Fall's inward turning is the gateway to the deep surrender into winter's dark mystery. It can be a little confusing that we first have to make it through a bunch of celebrations—Thanksgiving at the end of fall and then Christmas and the New Year at the beginning of winter, events that ask us to be more social and outer-directed—when nature is slowing down, releasing, and dropping her energy into the earth...

Nature herself can be a steady companion for this transition into winter. Most trees are stripped naked, down to their skeletons, allowing their simplicity, their bare bones to be seen. Plants are dead or in deep dormancy. This is what we, too, are invited into. What would it be like to drop our external ways of knowing ourselves—the face we show to the world—and to simply be ourselves, with no frills, no airs, and nothing to hide? What if we allowed unnecessary parts of ourselves to die or go dormant? Underneath our smiles, our helpfulness, our good ideas, our appropriate clothes, who are we anyway? This inquiry is winter's invitation to dive deeper into the mysterious dark, the great unknown, "the dark hours of [our] being" (Rilke).

Here's a starting place for a journal exploration, or a short ritual alone or with friends:

- Begin in the dark, naming this intention: "I am ready and willing to drop into the dark hours of my being." With each breath in the dark, feel yourself rooting down, dropping your energy into the earth, like the dormant trees and plants, dropping into "the dark hours of [your] being."
- When you are ready, light a single candle. As you take that light in, feel back into your connection with the earth, with the fertile darkness of your being.
- Name out loud or in your journal the parts of yourself you would like to drop, to allow to go dormant, to rest for awhile.
- Then name out loud or in your journal who you might be without these self-images, behaviors, or activities. Who is resting in the dark hours of your being?
- When you are done, acknowledge your gratefulness for this inward time of listening and being, and blow out the candle.

Please join us for the Winter Solstice Celebration on Saturday, December 21, at 7:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall (see page 8 for details). May you welcome and find grace in this changing of the seasons.

Winter Blessings,

Katy Taylor, Seasonal Coordinator Worship Associate
katy@thewingedheart.net

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



Pictured left to right: Caroline Spaulding, Matthew Morgan, Ruth Kirkland, Judy Solmonson, Allison Maxim Carlson, Pat Kelly, Ann Russell, Anne Haley, Steve Russell, John Haley.

Anne Haley: As a child, I was impressed with a Time Life book, *The World's Great Religions*. People around the world had different experiences and expressions of the Holy. Since then I have not believed that Christianity is the only way to the Holy, all the while, until now, being a member of a main line Protestant church. I am so happy to be where all traditions are honored, where each of us can find our own path that reflects service, integrity and joy.

John Haley: I am a retired businessman, husband, father and grandfather. I am also a model railroader and serious cribbage player. I've discovered that I have been a lifelong Unitarian, but just didn't realize it the first 64 years!

Pat Kelly: I am pleased to finally be a full participating member of Unity Church. My son Jackson and I have been a part of this community for seven years. As most parents here I see this church through my child's eyes—from being a cherub in the Christmas Pageant, to an otter in "Green to be You and Me," to teaching R.E. classes, volunteering at Jeremiah House and going to Chalice Camp. It has given us much joy and we look forward to continued participation.

Ruth Kirkland: I joined my first Unitarian Universalist church in Ventura, California, in 1977. I joined the Peace Corps in 1999 after 30 years of teaching high school and adult education English. In 2001 I moved to San Antonio, Texas, where I taught ESL to adults, started a small business and played rancher. I moved to St. Paul in June to be near my daughter's family including two grandchildren.

Allison Maxim Carlson: I am married to Nick Maxim Carlson and we have two wonderful boys, Rowen (8) and Bailey (16). We live in St. Paul where I work as a family law attorney. I am happy to have found Unity Church to nurture my spiritual growth and curiosity, to build a supportive community for my family and myself, and to use what I learn in my vocation in the law.

Judy Solmonson: I grew up in St. Cloud, lived in the Pacific Northwest for 25 years, and have now resided in Highland Park for 18 years. My grown children live in Portland, OR, and Waconia, MN, with their above average children. Family and friends are very important to me. Other interests include gardening, spirituality and simply celebrating life.

Caroline Spaulding: I was born in Tulsa, OK, where my family attended All Souls Unitarian Church. I went to school for fine arts and have a passion for painting, photography and writing. I currently works as a merchandise manager at Barnes and Noble.

Matt Morgan: I am passionate about Stephen King books and NFL football. We decided to become members of Unity Church to continue our spiritual growth and become part of a community that shares the same values and principles we do. We are engaged to be married April 19, 2014.

Interested in becoming a member of Unity Church? Please turn to page – for information about our Pathway to Membership class series.



Susan Lundquist: I came to Unity for Flower Communion seven years ago and knew I had found my church home. After a several year hiatus after having twins, my family returned and frequents the basement. Jane (10) likes helping in the nursery. Susan, Laura (5), and Betsy (5) are entering their third (and last!) year of Spirit Play. I works for Hennepin County Human Services.



Natasha and Rich Rodich: Rich and I live with our three children in Falcon Heights. Rich is an architect with a firm specializing in educational buildings and I work as a human resources consultant with the University of Minnesota. Natasha attended Unity Church while growing up with her parents, Richard and Nancy Birger.

Richard and Nancy Birger: We live in Roseville where I work as an artist and maintain my quilting business, Little Mother Quilting Company. Richard is retired from the U.S. Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service. We were married at Unity Church in 1966 and have returned after living in and out of the Midwest, most recently in Nevada.



Gabrielle and Joe: We moved to the Twin Cities nine years ago, and are happy to have made Saint Paul our home. When we are not working or driving our daughters, Aichatou and Mariana, to their various activities, we love watching the girls play and learn together, and spending time as a family.



Maureen and Gretchen Ulbee: I am a psychotherapist in private practice, and Gretchen is an attorney for Minnesota's publicly funded healthcare programs. We've been coming to Unity for about 18 months, and we love the welcoming and child-friendly atmosphere. Our kids Kieran (9) and Sydney (5) have especially appreciated the community's support of rainbow families and being able to wear their "Vote No" t-shirts to church.



Kelley and Matthew Nelson with sons



What's New in the Library and Bookstall!

From Louise Merriam, Library and Bookstall Team

It's gift-giving season. Is there any better gift than a book that reflects our values as Unitarian-Universalists? At the Unity Bookstall there are many new titles that would make great gifts, including:

- New book by Unity's literary minister Karen Herring, *Writing to Wake the Soul: Opening the Sacred Conversation Within*. The well-attended book launch party took place at the church on November 8.
- Books by Unity members: Kristen Wernecke (*Choosing Conscious Health for a Vibrant Life*) and Dr. Mic Hunter (*Conscious Contact: The Twelve Steps as Prayer*) have recently released books that are available in the Bookstall.
- Titles by perennial favorite Wendell Berry: This prolific writer has two recently arrived titles, *What are People For? Essays*, and *New Collected Poems*, which was described by the New York Times as returning "American poetry to a Wordsworthian clarity of purpose." The New York Review of Books said when reviewing *What Are People For?* in 2010, "... although the days of the prophets seem past to many of us, Berry may be the closest to one we have."

In addition to purchasing gifts at the Bookstall, members and friends of Unity can check out books and AV materials from the libraries. New books are added regularly, and readers can find the following titles in the Anderson adult library on the second floor of the Elliott Wing:

- *Blue Iris: Poems and Essays* by Mary Oliver
- *After the Stroke* by May Sarton
- *Family Pride: What LGBT Families Should Know ...* by Michael Shelton
- *God Knows Caregiving Can Pull You Apart: 12 Ways to Keep it All Together* by Gretchen Thompson

Parents and kids who visit the Whitman children's library in the religious education wing will find the following newly arrived books:

- *Love That Dog*, by Sharon Creech
- *Simple Gifts: A Shaker Hymn*
- *Peter Jameson's Secret Language* by Sylvan Zaft
- *Messenger* by Lois Lowry

Remember, if there's a title you think the Bookstall should carry or the libraries should own, just let us know. There are forms in the libraries and you can talk to a Bookstall person every Sunday.

Open Page Writing Sessions

Led by Consulting Literary Minister Karen Hering, Open Page writing sessions are opportunities to correspond with the "still, small voice within." Using stories, poetry, images and objects as well as wisdom from religious teachings, science and history, participants reflect on the month's theme in their own words and on their own pages. No writing experience is necessary.

Wednesday, December 4 • 7:00-9:00 p.m. • RSVP to karen@unityunitarian.org
Incarnation: This Embodied Life

How do the old stories of incarnation and our own contemporary experience together illuminate our understanding of this embodied life – with all its beauty and its brokenness and blessings? This session invites our reflection on the holiness nested within this world and our embodied experience of it.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Reflections from New Orleans



2013 New Orleans Pilgrims (left to right, back row): Matt Brown, Wanda Davies, Barbara Washburn, Al Harris, Don Arnosti, Dave Kaminski, Ray Wiedmeyer (left to right, front) Jane Thomson, Rick Heydinger, Pat Haff (Not pictured: Jane Prohaska)

The November pilgrimage to New Orleans included hands on service in two areas: rebuilding a home badly damaged in the 2005 flood after Katrina and volunteering at a large homeless shelter in the center of the city. The status of low income and mixed use housing was the theme of this year's pilgrimage which provided numerous opportunities for looking at issues of race and class related to housing directions both in New Orleans and in the U.S. It was also a time to gather with new and old friends, to experience the city's signature music and food and to participate in some deep reflection about how this kind of trip might impact our lives back in St. Paul. Below are memorable moments and reflections from some of the pilgrims.

"Each pilgrimage we take to New Orleans is very distinct, it takes on a character, a flavor shaped by the group participating which makes it unique and special. This year we spent more time in the Treme neighborhood which is home to Louis Armstrong Park, historic Congo Square and the birthplace of jazz. It is hard to express the feeling of standing in front of the Memorial to the Unknown Slave, a very modest but powerful piece of hallowed ground alongside St. Augustine's church, but when we as a group started to move away from the site, I felt a stillness and that I wasn't ready to leave." — Matt Brown

"At the beginning and end of each work day, Joseph the owner of the house we were working on, gathered us in a circle. We held hands and Joseph said a prayer: starting the workday with giving thanks for us coming from Minnesota to help him, and ending the workday giving thanks for the work we had done that day. He would then ask for our safety — in our work and in our travels. I was really touched when members of our group expressed how much they found meaning from the utter sincerity of these simple prayers, despite their own religious skepticism." — Dave Kaminski

"Four of the ten pilgrims chose to work at the Thompson Center, a daytime service center for homeless adults. Services found there include places to shower and shave, get a haircut, use phones or recharge mobile phones, set up a mailing address or get an I.D., see a doctor or social worker, and get groceries. Fantasizing about Mother Theresa, I volunteered to take the job of cleaning the shower stalls. I thought it would be dirty work, but I found that the stalls were tidy, and spraying a sanitizing solution was the main task. I also worked at the reception desk welcoming guests. I may find a way to do some work of this nature in St. Paul." — Jane Thomson

"Pilgrimage usually refers to a journey of religious significance but I think one can use the idea of seeing through "pilgrim eyes" for any journey in life whether you travel to your backyard or thousands of miles away. The trip to New Orleans was certainly a pilgrimage for me. From the prayers every morning and evening led by Joseph the homeowner to the emphasis on housing and homelessness I was prodded to see the spiritual nature of the work we do and how it opens me to the essential humanity of every person we meet." — Ray Wiedmeyer

Warm and Groomed and on the Way!

From the Restorative Justice Team

Men and women released from prison face huge challenges. They start with finding a bed and enough to eat on the first day out—nothing compared to finding an employer and/or a landlord who will hire or rent to an ex-offender. Doing either is difficult without transportation, especially during the winter, and who would want to apply for a job or an apartment without the basics for personal grooming?

These little things mean a lot to those trying to make good after doing their time. That's why Unity's Restorative Justice Team asks you to help provide the following items for its community partner, Amicus, who assists ex-offenders in need:

- New gloves, hats, scarves, and socks
- Hand and foot warmers
- Hygiene items such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, and shaving cream
- Bus passes or the cash to buy bus passes

The Restorative Justice team will collect these items starting on the first Sunday in December and continuing through February. You can bring them on Sundays to the Restorative Justice table in the Parish Hall or leave them at Pat Haff's office anytime. *Thank you!*

Evergreen Foodshelf

The third Sunday of every month is Evergreen Food Drive Sunday. Donations can be brought anytime and should be placed in the wicker trunks located at the Holly and Portland Avenue entrances. Suggested items for December 15: bottles of detergent (dish or clothing) and toilet paper.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Welcome a Guest to Your Table

Guest at Your Table is an annual tradition in which Unity Church members nurture a spirit of gratitude and "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations" and support the work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC).



This year there are two ways to participate in Guest at Your Table!

The first way:

Each year the UUSC asks that we set an extra place at our table for one of the tens of thousands of people around the world who are changing their lives for the better with our help. Place a bowl, jar, or other container at that place. Then, donate the cost of one portion of whatever you're having at each meal and place that money in the container. Keep this going through January 18.

The second way:

This year, youth and mentors in Unity's Coming of Age program are offering a unique opportunity to support the work of the UUSC. Congregation members can sponsor a youth/mentor pair as they undertake a service project from November to January. By sponsoring their service, you will match funds for hours worked, with all proceeds going to the larger work of the UUSC. If this alternative sounds interesting, please follow these steps:

1. Please stop by the Coming of Age table in the Parish Hall after worship any Sunday between November 24 and December 22 to sponsor our youth and mentors and learn about the service projects they have chosen to undertake this year.
2. The youth/mentor and the people they serve will be "guests" at your family dining table. A mentor/youth pair will contact you with information and updates about their service experience, reminding you to set aside your designated sponsorship amount.
3. At each meal, your family "feeds" a designated container with money. Again, set a place for the container, maybe even bring a chair, and imagine that the box is really a neighbor in need.

Regardless of how you choose to welcome a guest, all proceeds will go to the UUSC. On Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Sunday (January 19, 2014) bring your collected funds in the form of a check made out to Unity Church, and we will send them on to the UUSC.

This year, as a special bonus, any single contribution over \$100.00 will be matched by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.

This is both a wonderful opportunity for learning and a fine way to support a great organization!

Visit www.uusc.org/guest for more information or contact Drew Danielson at drew@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x112.

What does "home" mean to you?

"sanctuary
food
love"

This month the Affordable Housing Outreach Ministry Team will be hosting a table in the Parish Hall to ask our congregation to tell us in three words what home means to them.

"sighing into love"

These words will be turned into postcards which will be sent to the respective state legislators of each congregant to support a \$100 million funding bill for the construction and rehab of affordable housing for our

"family wild play"

"shelter love companionship"

lowest income community members.

Unity Church is joining Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative and more than 50 other congregations to build, support, and advocate for affordable housing and to end homelessness in Minnesota. Please add your voice by adding your name and words to this effort and becoming a "Beacon Citizen."

Last year, with the support of over 1500 "Beacon Citizens," \$4 million in new funding was secured for Minnesota homeless youth and \$33 million additional funding was raised for affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness. This year, Beacon hopes to recruit 3000 people from 30 congregations to support another large impact on availability of affordable housing.

Sustainable Agriculture Group

Thursday, December 12 • 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Rondo Library, 461 North Dale Street, St. Paul

This month, the Sustainable Agriculture Group is meeting at the Rondo Library to learn about "Frogtown Green," an evening in which folks from Frogtown who are working on different sites, gardens, urban farms, markets, food shelves and more, will get together to talk about what they do. The meeting will begin with a virtual tour slide show of Frogtown Farms, so we can get a sense of the depth and breadth of urban agriculture work being done in the neighborhood. The group may meet up for dinner in the neighborhood at 5:00 p.m. If you would like to join us for dinner, contact Hallman Ministerial Intern Jennifer Nordstrom at the church, 651-228-1456, x129, or jennifer@unityunitarian.org.

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Unity Church–Unitarian

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651-228-1456 • www.unityunitarian.org

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Pitter-pattering Questions

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

From Rev. K.P. Hong, Director of Religious Education



As another season turns and candlelights speak of winter festivals, familiar words from the prophet Isaiah come to mind and echo, almost as libretto for the familiar *Peaceable Kingdom* paintings of Edward Hicks: “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.”

So when Maria Montessori encouraged her teachers to “follow the child,” she was pursuing something far more extensive than keen pedagogical observation. She was asking them to follow the child as *their vocation and spiritual practice*. That childhood, and our attention to children’s spiritual lives, is an *abiding reality* and not a passing phase onto some more valid adult spiritual experience, needs, or pursuits. For mystic and theologian Karl Rahner, our looking through the eyes of a child—rather than naively copying or mimicking them—radicalizes our own spiritual journey with an infinite openness and expansiveness that children intimately sense and embody. How else, other than a radical change in how we fundamentally see and experience the world, can we begin to glimpse wolves lying down with lambs?

If modern theological frameworks, such as feminist, black, liberation, and minjung theologies, originate from the profound place of human experience—and UUs have a profound regard for human experience—then what of the experience and perspective of a child? How might they unsettle, surprise, indict, or run circles around our established understandings of the spiritual journey? Surely, this is not an easy exercise, entailing a certain humility and restraint necessary for our children to express themselves without reinterpretation or trivialization of what we as adults do not readily understand. But even so, I want to follow after the little child, if even for a momentary glimpse of what she sees.

And so I stood in front of a corkboard downstairs, caught by the third of the three *Sunday School Rules* we have for children: “Children may make their own choice, being careful about how our choices affect others in the world.” Do they really have such freedom and choice, I wondered, values that remain at the core of our faith? From a child’s perspective, is there anything recognizable as being completely free within the limited choices that govern their lives? So entirely dependent as they are upon the grace of others for education, safety, and wellbeing? Our children know—with a knowing intrinsic to their being and is their birthright—that there is no real choice to be made between grace and freedom, and that the thought of such a choice itself would be tragic. For a culture that celebrates a relentless pursuit of some perfect freedom, a child may lead in showing us that freedom can be found nowhere else than in the grace that surrounds us everywhere. That grace, through the eyes of a child, is freedom itself. What a glimpse that would be.

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

Children’s Musical Information Meeting

Sunday, December 8 • 12:30 p.m. • Robbins Parlor

For the past 25 years, talented members of the Unity Church community have come together to write, compose, direct, choreograph, and perform a unique show for Unity Church. Participation in the Unity Children’s Musical has been a rite of passage and transformative experience for many of our young people. If you have a 6th, 7th, or 8th grader, consider whether this creative, fun, team-building experience might be right for them. To find out more, come to this parent information meeting. Auditions and parent meeting will be Sunday, January 5, 2014, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Performance dates are February 27, 28 and March 1, 2014.

Religious Education Mark your calendar!

DECEMBER 2013

Sunday, December 1: No R.E. classes — special service for families!

Wednesday, December 4: New Family Orientation, 7:10 p.m.; Tween Youth cook WW dinner!

Sunday, December 8: Regular R.E.; High School Cookie and Wreath sales begin

Wednesday, December 11: “Santa Pause” holiday childcare event 6:00-8:30 p.m. (RSVP required)

Saturday, December 14: Teachers Night Out! 6:00-8:30 p.m. (RSVP required, must be a current teacher)

Sunday, December 15: Regular R.E., Celebration of New Lives

Sunday, December 22: Family Sunday (No R.E., nursery available) Carol Sing (9:00 and 4:30), Carol Shout (11:00)

Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Pageant, 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.; Family Lessons and Carols Candlelight Service, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 29: No R.E. classes — special activities for kids!

JANUARY 2014

Sunday, January 5: Regular R.E., New Workshop Rotation Cycle: “Divine Within”

Wednesday, January 8: New Family Orientation 7:10 p.m.; Tween Youth group and OWL resume

Sunday, January 12: Regular R.E.; Journey Guide – Passing of the Torch

Saturday, January 18: Parents Night Out! 6:00-8:30 p.m. (RSVP required)

Sunday, January 19: Story Sunday Grades 1-6 (MLK weekend); Bring Guest at Your Table Funds

Friday, January 24: Teachers Night Out! 6:00-8:30 p.m. (RSVP required, must be a current teacher)

Sunday, January 26: Regular R.E.; Jr. High Winter Semester classes begin!

MUSIC MINISTRY

Music Notes

From Ruth Palmer, Director of Music Ministry



Dark of winter, soft and still, your quiet calm surrounds me.

Let my thoughts go where they will, ease my mind profoundly.

And then my soul will sing a song, a blessed song of love eternal.

from words by Shelley Jackson Denham

Entering the season of advent and our December theme of incarnation brings to mind thoughts of expectant preparation and intention to move the abstract into concrete form.

As a musician, I immediately translate to that part of my process that literally births the imagined and intuited into the present and felt phrases of music. As a pianist, those moments between thoughtful embrace of a musical idea and imminent sound, as I release that idea through hand and fingers, is filled with the poignancy of advent and incarnation. Every sound is the result of the imaginative projection of intention and idea; that wisp of what could be, hope of touching another through that sound, daring to believe that one's heart could be articulated through mere sound, attempt to interpret and communicate the composer's original inspiration, and the absolutely necessary risk of totally letting go of one's own self in order to receive the sacred possibility of something beyond one's own control.

Sweet and daring are those moments and full of the deepest ownership of that "sacred possibility." It is dynamic, ever changing and always a new discovery. It takes absolute preparation in order to release to the infinite choices of descriptive thought, guidelines to help navigate one through all the preparation, and then willingness to just plain open up and explore where creative thought and love take one at any given moment. What a gift to be presented with an endless journey of discovery and hope in trying to reach that next small moment of birthing.

ONE VOICE MINNESOTA'S LGBT
MIXED CHORUS
December 6 & 7, 2013
HOLIDAY CONCERT
Building community and creating social
change by raising our voices in song.
Info & tickets:
www.OneVoiceMN.org 651.298.1954

Special Opportunities for Your Musical Journey

Peter Mayer in Concert at Unity Church
Friday, December 6 • 7:30 p.m. • Sanctuary



Minnesota based singer/songwriter Peter Mayer will be performing a solo concert at Unity Church. He will be playing a wide variety of songs, drawing from his collection of winter songs as well as newer material in anticipation of his forthcoming CD, which is due to be released in the spring. This is sure to be a lovely, intimate evening with one of Minnesota's finest songwriters.

Tickets are \$23.00 at www.brownbagtickets.com

Radiant Light

Holiday Concert and Carol Sing
Saturday, December 14

6:30 p.m.: Carol Sing

7:00 p.m.: Holiday Concert

8:00 p.m.: Holiday Dessert Buffet

Plan to bring family, friend, and your favorite holiday treat for the buffet table! Child care provided.

Artaria String Quartet at Wellspring Wednesday



Wednesdays, January 8, 15, and 22

Concerts with a Cause at Wellspring Wednesday

Donations will be gratefully accepted for Beacon Interfaith Housing, a local effort providing housing for homeless youth.

January 29: Pavia Winds

March 12: Sarah Carmack, Ruth Palmer and other guests

April 2: One Voice Mixed Chorus (special collection for specific GLBT youth housing)

April 9: Unity Singers

Unity Church Children's Musical

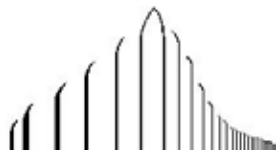
February 27, 28, and March 1, 2014 (see page 14)

Foote Music Sunday: Voices of Hope

Sunday, May 4, 2014, during all three services

Unity Choir • Children's Choir • Unity Singers

Women's Ensemble • Laura Sewell, cello



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

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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Samuel Morgan Community Forum

Michael Cowan

Saturday, December 7 • 9:30 a.m.–Noon • Unity Church

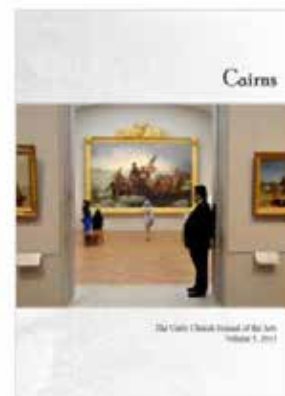
Forms of Communication that Shape Interracial Collaboration

Four patterns of interracial communication identified over 20 years of organizing in New Orleans will be presented and tested against participants' experience. Their implications for Unity's interracial partnership efforts will be considered. Please contact Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x107 to sign up for this forum.

Michael Cowan is a psychologist and theologian, a professor in the Institute for Ministry, Loyola University New Orleans. He has been involved in interfaith and interreligious dialogue and action in New Orleans since 1992. He was the founder of Common Good, a network of religious and civic organizations that worked with business leaders and elected officials to plan the rebuilding and transformation of New Orleans for the benefit of all after Hurricane Katrina.



Coming
December 2013



Cairns Vol. 5

Winter Holidays Office Hours

The Church Office will be closed on December 25 and 26, and on January 1, for the winter holidays.