

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.

The Life-Light

The Word was first,
the Word present to God,
God present to the Word.

What came into existence was Life,
and the Life was Light to live by.
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness;
the darkness couldn't put it out.
(John 1 The Message)

Although written in new language, the familiar Bible passage from John's gospel tells the story of the Incarnation — the Word made flesh. Incarnation has a wonderfully tangible and concrete feel to it. Incarnation literally means "embodied in flesh" or "taking on flesh." It is a concept found in many religious traditions. It is used to refer to the material manifestation of a divine entity, god, or force whose nature is immaterial. In the Christian context, incarnation refers to Jesus Christ, the "Word made flesh."

The Greek word for "word" is *logos* and can also be translated as mind, reason or logic. In the beginning was the Word, the mind, the reason, the *logos*. The Word was with God and the Word was God, and all things came into being through the Word. Life springs forth, and life not only in a biological sense, but in a spiritual sense, for this life was the light of all people. Incarnation, is believing that which is transcendent and most holy, is also deeply present in the flesh and blood existence of which we are all participants.

The Word also becomes flesh and lives among us. The transcendent becomes immanent. God takes on human skin, the same skin that you and I have. God has a body. What begins as a creation story in John's gospel, becomes a Christmas story. Incarnation tells us that the human, finite, material world is in fact capable of manifesting divine

goodness and grace. This is in contrast to the mind/body dualism that Western Christianity uses to treat the human body as something other than the essential person. The mind and spirit are true and the body is tarnished with lust and sin. Feminist and Womanist theologies offer this truth instead: what happens to us, to our bodies, matters — matters to us and to God. The value of flesh and human life; especially marginalized bodies matter. Incarnation doesn't just happen once and exclusively in Jesus; but keeps happening to everyone, everywhere. This is the salvation revealed to us in that tiny baby born in a stable in Bethlehem, the light and life made known to us, full of grace and truth. The incarnation manifests the power of the human body to bear the divine.

As the bearer of God, perhaps Mary knew more than most, how to embody the transcendent and holy with humility, love and grace? Upon learning of her pregnancy with Jesus, Mary sings (referred to as the Magnificat) that her soul magnifies God and her spirit rejoices in the midst of freedom and hope. She speaks of feeling strength like that which is embodied in "the sinew of a mother's arm and shatters the brittle pride of wealth; it levels the clay-foot thrones of tyrants; it upholds the forgotten, the scarred. Hunger, both body and soul, will be filled. The holy one cleaves to those who keep faith; it will endure in those who serve mercy" (from #619 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

When we allow God to be born in us, there is no telling at all, what will come out.

Ministerial Intern Andrea Johnson with this month's theme team: Drew Danielson, Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs, Carrie Eustis, Karen Hering, KP Hong, Arif Mamdani, and Ruth Palmer

Incarnation Theme Resources

FOR FAMILIES

Elijah's Angel: A Story for Chanukah and Christmas by Michael J. Rosen (Author), Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (Illustrator)

A child's vision of religious tolerance is exquisitely played out in this story about an elderly Christian barber and a Jewish child who befriends him.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens
Each of the ghosts in this classic story are an incarnation of an element of the holiday, and the characters incarnations of the ways one can react to or creatively take part in the celebration.

MOVIE

I Am Not Your Negro (2016)

An inspiring documentary on the legacy of African-American writer and activist, James Baldwin. A raw and moving engagement with our embodiment of racism.

BOOKS

The Fire This Time by Jesmyn Ward
Envisioned as a response to *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin's groundbreaking 1963 essay collection, these contemporary writers reflect on the past, present, and future of race in America.

The Gospel According to Jesus by Jose Saramago
In this provocative, tender novel, Saramago questions the meaning of God, the foundations of the Church, and human existence itself.

POETRY

"from spiralling ecstatically this" by ee cummings

Just Words



Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative and author of *Just Mercy*, has dedicated his life to making long-term positive social change. He says that there are four essential elements that inform and undergird the work. They are: proximity, narrative, discomfort, and hope.

Proximity is, at its heart, a matter of incarnation. We embody our values when we develop genuine, lasting relationships with people who are themselves directly impacted by systems of injustice that we seek to change. Without proximity our assumptions take over and mislead us. Advocacy without genuine relationship easily devolves into largesse and disrespect.

Narrative asks that, as the Psalmist asks of us, we sing unto God a new song. Narrative invites us to lean into prophetic imagination as we envision a world far more just and far more loving than the world we inhabit today.

Discomfort is inevitable. Change comes hard, especially for those who live privileged lives. If we want to make a real difference in the world we will breathe through the discomfort, recognize and honor what rage and resentment arise, and refuse to let whatever shame or judgement we may feel to make us leave the table.

Hope is a profoundly important spiritual practice. We look for evidence to justify being hopeful, but what is often called pragmatic hope does not require proof, it is a matter of survival. We simply cannot live without it.

As we turn with the turning of the year I find myself fitting the old strong stories of the season into Stevenson's framework. Each of the mid-winter holidays invites us to cuddle-in close, to sing old songs anew, and redeem old stories for new purposes. Each one pitches us into discomfort before we open ourselves to new hope. Each element serves as a gift, a doorway through which we enter love's stable.

Grateful as always,

Rob Eller-Isaacs

Transylvania Pilgrimage • July 31- August 13, 2018

Pilgrimage Information Session

Sunday, December 3 • 10:15-10:45 a.m.

Center Room

Gather with Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs in Budapest. From the glorious city on the Danube we will travel by private coach into the Unitarian homelands. We will visit Unitarian headquarters, the seminary, and the oldest Unitarian congregation in the world, before we settle in with our beloved friends in the little village of Homorodsztpeter. This year marks the 450th anniversary of the Edict of Torda (1568), to which we trace our beginnings. We will join in the festivities. To find out more about this unique opportunity for travel and learning, come to the information session between the morning services on December 3.



The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Craig Garrett

June 28, 1947 – October 25, 2017

In Celebration

Nic Cable

Ordained into the Unitarian

Universalist Ministry

November 12, 2017

Join Unity's Caring Circle

An important part of the Pastoral Care program at Unity Church is connecting church members and friends in need with temporary or one-time services provided by Unity's Caring Circle. Services include delivering a meal, shopping for groceries and other needed items, assisting at memorial services, helping with home/yard care, helping with pet care (feed and walk), and providing snow removal service, childcare, transportation, and overnight lodging.

Help us expand the ministry of the Caring Circle by filling out the online form at <http://bit.ly/caringcircle> and indicating the activities that you would like to assist us with. Forms will remain on file and a member of the Pastoral Care Team will contact you to request help with a service which you have indicated a willingness to provide.

Share a Joy or Concern

If you have a joy or sorrow, life-cycle event, or concern you would like to share with the Pastoral Care Team or congregation, please fill out the form at <http://bit.ly/joyconcern> and a team member will contact you.

If you prefer to speak directly with a minister, please contact Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x106.

DECEMBER SUNDAY WORSHIP / OFFERING RECIPIENTS

Sunday Worship

Sunday worship services are held at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., and 4:30 p.m. except where noted. Sermon podcasts and archives are available online at www.unityunitarian.org. Religious Education for children and youth is offered during all services.

December 3: *When the Light Breaks Through*

We are told that the divine broke through in the life of a newborn baby. Is it possible that the divine breaks through every life but does so in ways we can't easily recognize? Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Bob Lies will look for the light breaking through in this season of growing darkness.

December 10: *The History in Our Hands*

Nobel Laureate Jose Saramago, in *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*, presents the ministry of Jesus in the context of generational trauma. Had Joseph only stopped to warn the neighbors of the coming danger his son might have lived a very different life. Much as we long for the simple joy of the season we are still called to consider the whole of the story. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Suzanne Quinn-MacDonald will help us all to see the stories that our bodies tell.

December 17: Family Sunday

One More Redeemer

The whole church family will gather for our fabled carol sing (or, for the brave among you, carol shout at 11:00). We will celebrate the season and the completely unreasonable and unfathomably true story about the little child that comes to save us all. Janne Eller-Isaacs, KP Hong, and worship associate Kevin Ward will lead the worship team.

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

December 24: *Find a Stillness* • 10:00 a.m.

Step out of the din and into the quiet of the Sanctuary as we begin our Christmas Eve services with an opportunity for quiet contemplation, deepening our breathing, and sharing the ancient sacrament of communion. Turn to page eight for a complete listing of the services offered on Christmas Eve.

December 31: *Slaughter of the Innocents* • 10:00 a.m.

The biblical story of the slaughter of the innocents (Matthew 2:16-18) is a difficult story of violence and destruction. Appearing as it does, immediately after the birth of Jesus, we're forced to grapple with questions of good and evil. As is the tradition at Unity Church, as the holiday season concludes, ministerial interns Arif Mamdani and Andrea Johnson will take up this difficult and complicated story and explore what meanings we might make of it today.

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 a chosen community non-profit recipient. Please make checks payable to Unity Church.

December 3: *We Are All Criminals*

Founded in 2012 by Minnesotan Emily Baxter, We Are All Criminals (WAAC) is a small organization with a team of dedicated volunteers, interns, and advisors across the United States, advocating for reason and mercy in our criminal and juvenile justice systems. WAAC's website offers compelling personal stories aimed to open conversations about crime, privilege, punishment, and second chances. Today's collection will help update this website which, at hundreds of thousands of hits each year, is challenging society's ideas of what it means to be a criminal. Patricia Ohmans, Steve Nelson, Russel Balenger, Ray Wiedmeyer, and Danny Givens are among Unity's advocates for the mission of WAAC.

December 10: *Prepare and Prosper*

Prepare and Prosper assists individuals moving out of poverty by providing free tax assistance to thousands of low-income working taxpayers. Prepare and Prosper also provides access to financial services to encourage low-income workers to build assets and thus improve their long-term financial security. Prepare and Prosper runs a tax clinic at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center in the Summit-University neighborhood.

December 17: *Growth and Justice*

Growth and Justice is a non-partisan, non-profit, research and advocacy organization, focused on expanding prosperity in Minnesota. It promotes policies that reduce inequality and eliminate racial disparity through investment in human capital and public infrastructure, by ensuring universal and affordable health care, and through a cleaner and greener economy. Unity Church member Dane Smith is president of Growth and Justice.

December 24: *Ministers' Discretionary Fund*

This fund provides the ministers a means by which they are able to respond to a world with a wide variety of needs.

December 31: *discapitados abriendose caminos*

discapitados abriendose caminos (d.a.c.) is a small beacon of light for low income Latino families caring for a family member with disabilities. As Minnesota's only non-profit dedicated solely to the needs of this population, d.a.c. is an award winning part of a network of small culturally focused family centers. Program activities include home visits, doctor and school visits, as well as weekly parent education and support groups dedicated to strengthening Latino families. Unity Church member Linda Kjerland is a longtime d.a.c. volunteer.

Please consider submitting a nomination for the Generosity Ministry. Complete the short nomination form online at <http://bit.ly/ucgenerosity>. It couldn't be easier!

Mapping Our Future: Renewing Our Ends

From Bailey Webster, Trustee



If you haven't heard about the "Ends renewal process," you will very soon. In 2018, the Unity Board of Trustees will be rewriting the Church's Ends Statements.

Ends statements articulate what difference our shared ministry will make in the world, and for which people. And, lest they get stuffy, they are re-articulated every five years. Re-written to reflect shifts in the church's longings and intentions. Given new life and re-committed to by the Board, the Executive Team, and the congregation.

The Ends renewal process doesn't happen in a vacuum. In fact, we will be asking each and every congregation member to take part in the process. We need *you* to help us answer the question: what difference will the church make in the world, and for which people?

You've heard it from the pulpit many times: what sets the Unitarian Universalist tradition apart from many other faith traditions is that we are a covenantal faith, not a creedal faith. We covenant with each other, which means we make promises about who and *how* we want to be in the world — as individuals, as a faith community, and as a presence in the larger world.

When Rob and Janne say we're a "promise-making, promise-keeping, promise-breaking, promise-renewing" people, they are talking about the promises we make to ourselves, each other, and the larger world. The promises we keep and sometimes break. And the promises that we, ultimately, reconstitute and renew intentionally and deliberately.

Enter: Ends Statements. These are the promises we will make to each other, and hold each other accountable to, for the next five years. This is a big deal. Unity's Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for crafting the next set of Ends statements, but we need your input to make sure they are a true incarnation of our commitments.

Beginning in January, congregation members will be asked to participate in a conversation to inform the board's renewal of the church's Ends Statements. These small-group sessions will be led by congregation members trained as facilitators. A board member will attend each of the gatherings to listen and record the vision articulated by the group.

You need not be a member of the church to participate. No matter how long you have been attending Unity Church, or how you see your role here, the Board wants to hear from you. Your voice is essential to the process, so please participate in a workshop in January or February! Sign up for a gathering at <http://www.unityunitarian.org/mission-and-ends.html>.

The Congregation of Unity Church-Unitarian joyfully invites you to attend the ordination of

Shay MacKay

Saturday, December 2, 2017
at 10:00 a.m.

Unity Church Sanctuary

Reception to follow.
Childcare provided.

Kindly RSVP by November 25:
unityunitarian.org/ordination.html



Annual Pledges and Year-End Gifts

2018 Operating and Capital Pledges

Many thanks to everyone who has made pledges for 2018! **If you haven't yet pledged, please do so today!** Make your pledge online at www.unityunitarian.org. **Thank you!**

Make a year-end gift to Unity Church!

As we come to the close of 2017, 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/yearendgift2017> (please select "other payment" and include "year-end" in the comments) or by contacting Barbara Hubbard at barbarah@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x116.



WWW.UNITYUNITARIAN.ORG

2017-18 MINISTERIAL INTERNS

Hallman Ministerial Intern: Arif Mamdani



The morning of Halloween, my wife and I were awakened at 4:00 a.m. by one of our cats incessantly scratching at our door. It isn't uncommon for her to decide that the early morning hours are playtime, but this morning, she sounded agitated and uncertain. Still, it was 4:00 a.m. I pulled a pillow over my head and tried to go back to bed. To my surprise, about 30 minutes later, I heard scratching at the door again, followed by what sounded like the door opening, and then footsteps walking toward our bed. My wife, thinking it was our youngest daughter said "it's still sleepy time sweetie, go back to bed." The footsteps paused near the foot of our bed, then walked back toward the door. I heard footsteps out in the hallway, and then nothing.

You know when something sounds "not quite right?" Well, that's how those footsteps sounded. I realized with a jolt that I hadn't heard the door close on the way out, yet when I opened my eyes, the door was quite clearly closed. Confused, I got up, went out into the hall, turned on the lights and looked in the kids' rooms. Both were very clearly fast asleep, covers pulled up. It was clear that neither had been out of bed for quite some time. The cats were nowhere to be seen. Slightly unsettled, I went downstairs and looked around. Nothing. Seeing nothing amiss, I returned to bed, and mentioned to my wife that we had apparently had our first ghost encounter in the house.

I can't honestly say if I believe in ghosts, but I can't come up with a "rational" reason for what happened that night. More so, I know that in this season, especially the time between Halloween and the New Year, spirits of our ancestors feel closer than at other times during the year. This is particularly the case if we've recently lost a loved one and are entering a time when their absence might feel fresh again.

All of this has me thinking about how we relate to that sense of presence, and the feeling of loss that accompanies it. The spirits of our ancestors can certainly haunt us, but I think they can guide us too. In this time when the ancestors feel near, when by many traditions, the "membrane" between this world and other worlds is thinner, I wonder how you're encountering the spirits of your ancestors and departed loved ones?

However you're encountering spirits this holiday season, I hope you can join me in trying to remember that celebratory as this season can be, it can also be a time of memory, a time of sadness, and can carry with it a renewed sense of loss. As we remember all of the ways we might experience these holidays, let's also remember to be hold each other gently, and receive each other with care.

Please feel free to contact me at arif@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x109.

Ministerial Intern: Andrea Johnson



The holiday season is upon us and if I am honest I sometimes find the decorating, present buying, and cookie baking as chores to check off my to-do list rather than activities that bring our family together. It's a good thing that I have my eight-year-old daughter, Kate, to remind me of the joy, excitement, and anticipation that comes with hanging a favorite ornament on the tree or shaking the wrapped boxes trying to guess what is inside.

As I get ready to send my oldest son off to college this summer, I am also reminded of time's quick passing and how this will be the last year that all three of my children will live permanently at home together.

This month I'm going to take Kate's perspective and say "yes" to her requests to spend time with me decorating the tree or making Christmas cookies. I intend to choose presence this Christmas season in the spirit of joy and love rather than a "should, have to, ought to." Despite the hectic holiday season at home and at church, I will slow down, breathe and tell Kate about my favorite Christmas traditions as a kid.

Getting out the Spritz maker and making cookies with my mom was one of the best parts of Christmas. Spritz and Pepparkakor are two of the foods that keep me connected to my Swedish heritage and culture. Even at 15 and 17, Ben and Alex will often join Kate, me and my mom for this annual cookie baking session — usually the day after Thanksgiving. It is fun to pack away some of the cookies in the freezer to eat on special occasions in December and to "sneak" one or two even if it is not Christmas yet! Eating meat and chocolate fondue on Christmas Eve was the other family tradition I treasured growing up. I would always help by making the dipping sauces for the meat — a spicy red and a white remoulade. We'd start in the late afternoon with a game of hearts by the fire and then we'd open one present, eat our fondue, and head to church for an evening service. I loved our family's Christmas Eve celebration.

As I reflect on these traditions, what I love about them is that they brought our family together with joy and laughter. Author Masin Kipp captures my intent for this month perfectly: "At the end of the day: do others feel loved in your presence? This is the spiritual bottom line."

Please feel free to contact me at andrea@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x129.

open-hearted
love vocation
brokenness sacrifice
incarnation listening

CHALICE
CIRCLES

belonging
sharing courage
transformation
pilgrimage hope

Turn to page 12 for details.

WELCOME WORDS / CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Welcome Words

Rev. Lisa Friedman, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement



Each December the paradox arrives — how to heed the call to peace and stillness amid the hustle and bustle of so many high hopes and expectations. Whether you love the holidays or dread them, Unity Church can help you ground your spirit this season. For there is strength and comfort to be found in being together, whether it is singing a beloved carol, sitting in the stillness of the sanctuary, baking cookies or making wreaths, or collecting warm mittens and supplies for those who need them.

There is also hope to be found in sharing all that stirs in our hearts in community — the joys and sorrows, the dreams and struggles, the moments of grace and repair. Come celebrate with us. Let us know how we can help you find your stillness and keep your balance in these holy days. Blessings of the season to you and yours!

Pathway to Membership Classes

Unity Church offers classes and connection for visitors who are exploring Unity Church as a spiritual home. Learn more at the Welcome Table on Sundays or contact Rev. Lisa Friedman, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement (lisa@unityunitarian.org / 651-228-1456 x107). She is also happy to meet with you personally to answer questions and to welcome you into the congregation. Childcare provided.

Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Inquiry

Finding Yourself at Unity is now offered on a regular basis on Sundays, from 10:15-11:15 a.m., in the Ames Chapel, and monthly after the 4:30 p.m. service, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. These sessions can be attended in the order that works for you and will offer participants the opportunity to share part of their 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. Childcare is available in the nursery.

December topics include:

December 3: Community Outreach and Social Justice

December 10: Religious Education for Children, Youth, & Adults

The December 10 session is also offered after the 4:30 service, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

December 17: Worship and the Liturgical Year

Please note that there will not be classes on December 24 or 31. Classes resume on January 7.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Saturday, January 20, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Have you been considering membership at Unity Church? This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. It offers time to reflect on the meaning of generosity and how you can discover the places in your life where the world's needs meets the gifts and joy you have to offer. The class concludes with a celebration ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church!

Mentoring at Unity

A Path to Deeper Connection

Unity has a mentor program, which is available to all visitors and new members. A mentor is available as a guide and a resource in the congregation. They pledge to meet at least once a month face to face, and be available for ongoing questions and advice for at least six months. Each mentor/mentee team can decide what is most helpful – to have a buddy with whom to attend services and events, or a partner with whom to discuss Unitarian Universalism and each other's spiritual journeys, and more. If you have questions, or would like to request a mentor, please stop by the Welcome Table in the Parish Hall or email Rev. Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org.

Addiction/Mental Health Recovery Event

Year End Gratitude Potluck

Thursday, December 28

6:00-9:00 p.m. • Parish Hall

Bring a dish to share and a small token that symbolizes your gratitude. Individuals and family members are all welcome wherever you are on the road to recovery. This is a holiday celebration that is free from alcohol and drugs, supportive, loving and fun! Help expand an attitude of gratitude with our recovering community and family here at Unity Church.

Front Desk Volunteers!

Unity's Front Desk Team is seeking substitutes for when a regular volunteer is unable to cover their shift. Training is provided. Shifts are from 9:00-1:00 and 1:00-5:00. Please contact Joan Carver at jycarver@gmail.com if you are interested.

Unity Church Social Media

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/unityunitarian/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UnityUnitarian>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/unityunitarian/>

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS / WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Fellowship Groups

Groups are open to all members and friends of Unity Church.

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

Caregivers Group: An informal support group for caregivers. Third Thursday of the month (December 21) from noon–2:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org

Evergreen Quilters: No regular meetings in December. See page nine for details about Evergreen Quilters. Contact: Peggy Wright at 651-698-2760

Kung Fu: Saturday mornings in the Body Room from 10:00 a.m.-noon. Recommended for ages 15 and older. Childcare is available. Contact Bryan Kujawski at barney.kujawski@gmail.com

LGBTQ+ Group: First Sunday of the month (December 3) from 12:30-2:00 p.m. and the third Sunday of the month (December 17) from 6:30-8:00 p.m. All are welcome!

Living With Grief Group: For people living with grief and loss. Third Tuesday of the month (December 19) from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, December 4 and 18, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact: Phil Morton at 952-934-3578

New Look at the Bible: Second Thursday of the month (December 14) at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade at 651-771-7528

Textile Arts Group: All ages and levels of experience are welcome! Meets the first and third Thursdays of each month (December 7 and 21), from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, crocheting, tatting, embroidery, needlepoint, and cross stitch. Contact: Linda Mandeville at lindamandeville41@gmail.com

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne at jack.hawthorne@comcast.net. Upcoming discussions: December 12: *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy January 9: *The Heart of the Sea* by Nathaniel Philbrick

UU History Book Club: This group will not meet during December but participants are reading *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. Contact: Krista Hanson at klfhanson@yahoo.com

Women In Retirement, The Choice Years: This group meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month (December 14 and 28), from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org

Zen Meditation: Find renewal and grounding. Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m., in the Ames Chapel. This group will not meet on December 26 and there will be no instruction offered on December 5. Contact Ken Ford at kenfaure@gmail.com

Wellspring Wednesday

Wellspring Wednesday is a multi-generational opportunity to gather midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. Dinner is at 6:00 p.m., worship in the Ames Chapel at 6:45 p.m., and programming begins at 7:10 p.m. All are welcome. Childcare is available and you do not have to sign up in advance. The cost for dinner is: \$7/adult, \$4/child ages 5 to 12, \$2/child ages 2 to 4, and \$20/family. (Children under the age two are free.) All meals will offer vegetarian, vegan, and gluten free options. Email Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org for financial assistance to help cover the cost of dinner.

Wellspring Wednesday winter break is December 13-January 3.

DECEMBER 6

Dinner: TBD

Reflections on Unitarian Universalist Association Leadership with Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs

Join us as Hallman Intern Arif Mamdani interviews Rob on his recent UUA Board service, which capped over 40 years of service to our denomination. Rob will reflect on his learning and the issues facing our faith today.

Help the CLF Prison Ministry Spread the Holiday Spirit

Looking for a service project to do around the holidays? Why not spread a little holiday cheer to Unitarian Universalists behind bars? Join the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) Prison Ministry and UUs from around the Twin Cities to help address envelopes to CLF's 800+ members in prison. Activities for children will also be provided.

UU Theology: What Saves Us?

UU Theology is a five-session introduction to theological concepts through a Unitarian Universalist lens. Each session explores what our Unitarian Universalist tradition teaches about a particular idea, and how it helps us to clarify and act on our own beliefs. This is the last class in this series.

Religious Education New Family Orientation

Led by Director of Religious Education, KP Hong, this session is for new families to Unity Church, who would like to learn more about religious education. Information on class registration will also be available.

Embodied Spiritual Practice: Yoga

Join yoga instructor Gabe Brindle for an hour-long exploration of spiritual growth within the Himalayan yoga tradition. Gabe will guide you in discussion, yogic breathing techniques, movement, and guided meditation. All levels of yoga experience and all body types are honored.

Go: A Chinese Game

Learn and play the Chinese board game, Go. Anyone above the age of 10 is welcome to play. www.usgo.org/what-go.

Tween Group: Grades 5-7

Join Unity's tweens for an evening of fun and fellowship in the last Wellspring Wednesday of 2017!

DECEMBER WORSHIP AND EVENTS

Holiday Service Information

Sunday, December 17 • Family Sunday

One More Redeemer • 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 4:30 p.m.

The whole church family will gather for our fabled carol sing (or, for the brave among you, carol shout at 11:00). We will celebrate the season and the completely unreasonable and unfathomably true story about the little child that comes to save us all. Janne Eller-Isaacs, K.P. Hong, and worship associate Kevin Ward will lead the worship team.

Wednesday, December 20

Blue Holidays Service • 6:30-7:30 p.m. • Ames Chapel

Join us for this contemplative service for all who are lonely, grieving, and hurting during the holidays. Come and be with others in the community as we take gentle care of our tender hearts together. Childcare will be provided. Questions? Contact Arif Mamdani at arif@unityunitarian.org.

Thursday, December 21

Winter Solstice Celebration • 7:00 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 have questions, please contact Katy Taylor at katy@katytaylor.com or 651-363-1877.

Christmas Eve • Sunday, 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. Participant information is online at www.unityunitarian.org. Want to sing in a pageant choir? Turn to page nine.

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

This service is a collaboration between Above Every Name Ministries and Unity Church. This is a service for the entire family, with carols and stories 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. If you are interested in singing with the choir during this service, turn to page nine and contact Ruth Palmer at ruth@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x118.

Sunday, December 31

Slaughter of the Innocents • 10:00 a.m.

The biblical story of the slaughter of the innocents (Matthew 2:16-18) is a difficult story of violence and destruction. Appearing as it does, immediately after the birth of Jesus, we're forced to grapple with questions of good and evil. As is the tradition at Unity Church, as the holiday season concludes, ministerial interns Arif Mamdani and Andrea Johnson will take up this difficult and complicated story and explore what meanings we might make of it today.

Christmas Pageant

Children and youth of Unity Church! Join this year's Christmas Pageant cast in telling the Nativity story on Christmas Eve! Being a part of this tradition is another rite of passage for many children as then can participate from kindergarten through high school, and join at any age. Registration and rehearsal details are available online at <http://bit.ly/ucupageant2017>. Questions? Contact Kelley Loughrey at kelleyloughrey@comcast.net.

In 2019, Unity's beloved pageant will celebrate its 100th anniversary! In January, a Pageant Centennial Team will be formed to help plan this special event. If you have memories, stories, or photos to share, or would like to help with planning, please email Kelley at kelleyloughrey@comcast.net.

Santa Pause

Wednesday, December 13
5:30-8:00 p.m. • Parish Hall

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 michelle@unityunitarian.org.

Solstice Yoga Practice

Wednesday, December 20
7:00-8:30 p.m. • Foote Room

In yoga, and in astrology, the sun symbolizes the soul. The word "solstice," in Latin, means sun standing still, so in a sense, we could say the soul stands still on the solstice—maybe even long enough for us to catch a glimpse of it. Join Elen Bahr for a yoga practice of stillness and quiet in which we recognize our souls as the light of the world within the darkest time of year. If you'd like, bring an item to place on the altar to help manifest the collective soul energy of the group.

DECEMBER WORSHIP AND EVENTS

All-Church Holiday Boutique

Evergreen Quilters and Mano a Mano

Sunday, December 3 and 10 • 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. • Parish Hall

Mano a Mano will have goods for sale after the 4:30 service.

- Artisan-made knitted and woven sweaters, totes, shawls, scarves, hats, tablecloths, and more from Bolivia
- Hand-sewn and quilted table runners, wall-hangings, zippered bags, purses, ornaments, and other gift items made by Evergreen Quilters
- 100% of the proceeds from the sale will benefit the communities that these two organizations support
- Cash and checks preferred, but credit cards also possible

Both groups wholeheartedly thank our church community for their support.

Evergreen Quilters is a group of church members and friends who collaborate on quilting projects and share knowledge, creativity, and skills with each other and the wider community. People of all skill levels are welcome to join. Instruction is gladly offered. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday (7:00-9:00 p.m.) and fourth Saturday (10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) year-round. The next meetings are January 9 and 20. To learn more about the group's activities, please contact Peggy Wright at 651-698-2760.

Evergreen contributes money and food to help local homeless and hungry people through non-profits such as The Family Place, Jeremiah Program, Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf, and occasionally others.

The Mano a Mano Outreach Ministry Team supports the work of Mano a Mano International, connecting our church community to communities in rural Bolivia. We bring in speakers, help sponsor trips to Bolivia, help fundraise to build schools, roads and medical clinics there and help repurpose medical supplies. We meet monthly on the second Wednesday—all are welcome to join us.

Holiday Meal Baskets

Evergreen Quilters is donating \$200 to Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf to buy turkeys for holiday meal baskets made available to families using the food shelf. The following items are also needed to complete the 15 baskets:

- Boxed potatoes; gravy mixes; canned green beans, corn, and carrots; corn bread mixes; and canned cranberry sauce
- Other non-perishables are also always appreciated

Last month Unity Church members and friends donated 308 pounds of food to the food shelf. Food shelf collection trunks are located at the Holly and Portland entrances.

Mitten Tree

Unity's holiday tradition of generosity begins again on December 3. 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. Adult items will be distributed through Amicus.

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 3, following each service, and continue until all the goodies have been sold!



Sing with a Choir on Christmas Eve

Pageant Choir Rehearsals

Children's Pageant Choir

Sunday, December 17

10:15 - 11:00 a.m. • Robbins Parlor

Kathleen Radspinner, director

Adult Pageant Choir

Sunday, December 17

10:15-11:00 a.m. • Choir Room

Jeffrey Hess, director

Christmas Eve

Candlelight Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday, December 19

7:30 p.m. • Choir Room

Ruth Palmer, director

Come and sing for this meaningful service! If you are planning to sing with the 10:00 p.m. candlelight service choir, contact Ruth Palmer at ruth@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x116.

Christmas Eve

Children's Pageant Choir

3:15 p.m. • Foote Room

Pageant performances are at 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.

Adult Pageant Choir

3:15 p.m. • Parish Hall

Pageant performances are at 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.

Candlelight Choir

9:00 p.m. • Choir Loft

Sing at the 10:00 p.m. candlelight service.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Morgan Forum with Michael Cowan

Saturday December 16 • 9:30 a.m.-Noon • Parish Hall

Making white people feel guilty is not a strategy for change.

Michael Cowan is a professor at Loyola University New Orleans, and a fellow in the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict in the University of Oxford and the Irish School of Ecumenics in Trinity College Dublin. A leader in interracial and interfaith community organizing in New Orleans since 1990, he initiated an issue-based interracial effort to rebuild New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. A provocative and thoughtful speaker, Michael Cowan has helped to welcome and guide our congregation's efforts in New Orleans.



Help Provide a Meal for Jeremiah Families

Help cook a meal at The Jeremiah Program (932 Concordia Avenue, St. Paul), a residence and education program for single moms and their children. Unity Church volunteers are needed to help prepare meals before evening classes on the following dates: Tuesday, December 12; Tuesday, March 20; Tuesday, April 10. Helpers (including kids over eight years old) work from 4:00-7:00 p.m. To volunteer contact Karen Buggs at 651-297-0111 or buggs745@hotmail.com.

Make Winter Warmer for People Seeking Second Chances

From Unity's Racial and Restorative Justice Outreach Team

Men and women released from prison face huge challenges on their way to rejoining society. Challenges start with finding a bed and enough to eat on the first day out — nothing compared to finding employment and a home. 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 Racial and Restorative Justice Team asks you to help provide the following items for its community partner Amicus who assists those leaving prison in a time of need:

- Hygiene items such as washcloths, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hand lotion, deodorant, dental floss, razors and shaving cream (all items should be unopened)
- New winter coats, gloves, hats, scarves, boots (men's) and socks suitable for the job site (sizes XL and above always needed)
- Hand and foot warmers
- Bus passes or the cash to buy bus passes

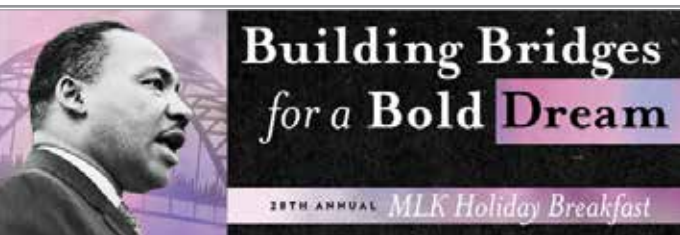
The Racial and Restorative Justice Team will collect these items through January. On Sundays, please bring donations to the Racial and Restorative Justice table in the Parish Hall. Donations delivered during the week should be brought to Rev. Lisa Friedman's office.

One Voice Mixed Chorus: Sanctuary

Friday, January 19 • 7:30 p.m. • Ordway Concert Hall
Sunday, January 21 • 3:30 p.m. • Ordway Concert Hall
Tickets at <http://bit.ly/sanctuary2018>



Sanctuary explores the music of immigrant cultures to Minnesota — from early Scandinavian immigrants, to African Americans arriving through the Underground Railroad, and more recent music of Hmong, Mexican, and Somali communities. Several contemporary songs describe the experience of LGBT people struggling for a place of belonging and finding home through both biological and chosen family. This concert is in collaboration with Green Card Voices (www.greencardvoices.com) which has collected stories of youth immigrants. These youth storytellers are featured throughout the concert and photos and stories will be displayed.



Annual MLK Holiday Breakfast

Monday, January 15 • 7:00–9:30 a.m.

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
285 Dale Street N, St. Paul, MN 55103

Each year, the General Mills Foundation and UNCF present an annual MLK Holiday Breakfast at the Minneapolis Convention Center to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This year's keynote will be presented by David Oyelowo, lead actor from the film *Selma*.

With the help of countless volunteers, Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul hosts breakfasts at nine neighborhood locations, featuring a live broadcast of the General Mills event as well as a hot breakfast and local programming. Unity's neighborhood location is Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. For more information and to register for the event, please visit <http://interfaithaction.org/mlk>.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Sustainability at the Holidays

From Unity's Sustainable Living Team

There is power in numbers, and those numbers can be mind-boggling!

For example, if every American gave up disposable coffee cups, we could save 363 million pounds of waste and 3.1 million tons of CO₂ yearly, according to the EPA blog. If 800 of us at Unity Church did, we'd save around 900 pounds of trash and 7.7 tons of carbon. When

we take small actions together, we can make a real difference! This is why we're inviting the Unity Church community into simple acts of environmentalism each month.

The holiday season seems like a perfect time to start. While holidays like Christmas can be a celebration of the holy, and a time for family, it can also feel like a huge hurried hassle, and a strain on our checkbooks. The average American spends over \$800 on gifts! Meanwhile, the planet also feels the burden. Christmas lights in the U.S. consume enough electricity to light up 500,000 homes. We use 333 million square feet of wrapping paper and purchase mountains of gifts, each with their own tangled web of environmental impact.

So, here is our challenge to you. Simplify your gift giving! Find other ways to express your love and affection. And here's the real truth (for those of us with "enough") — there's a good chance it will make for a happier holiday — and life.

You could reduce your overall gift giving, give the gift of time, give an experience such as a night at the theater or a trip to a museum, give money to someone's favorite charity, or knit or bake something.

While gifts can be an expression affection, they can feel like an obligation, something that should be reciprocated. But what of our obligations to our collective future? To change the rules, you may also need to have conversations with your loved ones about why and how you want to change. One of our members did just that with their family of origin. They reduced the number of gifts given and instead re-distributed those funds — nearly \$500 — to give as a group to a charity. Yes! Power in numbers!

Wherever you are at with your environmental journey, pick one thing you will do to make your holiday a little greener and more enjoyable! Together, we can give our kids the gift of a healthy planet!

Please connect with the Sustainability Team to let us know how it went. **Our next meeting is December 3, at 10:15, in the Crothers Room.**



Racial Justice Movie Night

Friday, December 8 • 7:00 p.m. • Parish Hall

Forrest Gump



Join Unity Church members and friends for an ongoing film series to further our growth in the understanding and challenging of white supremacy and structural racism. Popcorn will be served and there will be time for conversation after the film.

Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks) has never thought of himself as disadvantaged, and thanks to his supportive mother (Sally Field), he leads anything but a restricted life. Whether dominating on the gridiron as a college football star, fighting in Vietnam, or captaining a shrimp boat, Forrest inspires people with his childlike optimism. But one person Forrest cares about most may be the most difficult to save — his childhood love, Jenny (Robin Wright) (IMDB).

An Invitation

No More Moments of Silence

From Unity's Gun Sense Ministry Team

What: A workshop training participants to be advocates for sensible gun policy in Minnesota. Led by Gun Sense Ministry Team partner, Protect Minnesota, this training will include information on current Minnesota gun bills, power mapping, messaging, and coalition building.

When: Thursday, December 14, from 5:00-7:00 p.m., requires registration and \$20 which covers dinner and materials. Register online at <http://bit.ly/protectmn2017>.

Where: Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 285 Dale, St. Paul
December 14 marks the fifth anniversary of the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary. After the workshop, from 7:00-8:00 p.m., there will be an Interfaith Service dedicated to victims of gun violence. Open to all. No registration.

Questions? Contact Sue Conner at sue.conner@comcast.net or Joan Duke at joanduke@comcast.net.



SPIRITUAL REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

2018 Thresholds Group

Open for Registration

From Rev. Karen Hering

Are you crossing a threshold in your life — a change in relationship, work, home, roles, identity or abilities that feels like a turning point, whether you've chosen it or not? If this describes your own life now, consider joining the 2018 Threshold series, a facilitated small group for reflecting on the changes in our lives and discovering the support that comes from exploring our thresholds in the company of others. (NOTE: Group size is limited and pre-registration is required.)

"We all go through challenging transitions but we don't have to do it alone. The Thresholds experience was clarifying and good for the soul!"

The Threshold series "provided me with companions and compatriots, and well-timed doses of inspiration in a time of need," said one participant in a previous group. "We all go through challenging transitions but we don't have to do it alone. The Thresholds experience was clarifying and good for the soul!"

In a supportive small group facilitated by literary minister Karen Hering, each participant reflects on the threshold they're crossing while accompanying others in crossing their own. Using conversation, guided writing, and a variety of other creative activities both playful and serious, the group considers the meaning, risks and possibilities present on our thresholds.

"The thresholds group gave me an unexpected gift," said another participant in last year's group. "I made a major breakthrough in personal growth, with the help of Karen and the others in the group."

"The Crossing Thresholds series was my first experience with any group at Unity Church," said another, noting that he "felt a profound connection with those in the group, the basis of which was kindness and deep respect - on a level I've rarely experienced."

Participants are asked to commit to all four Saturday sessions: January 20, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., and three additional Saturday mornings, 9:00 a.m.-noon: February 10 and 24, and March 17. At the end of the series, on March 18, the group will be blessed by the congregation in worship, honoring the role of community in giving us all safe passage across the many thresholds of our lives.

The series is free to members; a fee of \$100 will be charged nonmembers at the time of registration. Register early to reserve your place by email to Karen Hering (karen@unityunitarian.org) or put a note in her church mailbox. Include your name, phone, email or street address, and a sentence or two describing the threshold you have crossed or will be crossing soon.

Reintroducing Chalice Circles

Grow Your Soul in the New Year!



Chalice Circles are a way of engaging our monthly worship themes through deep listening and open-hearted sharing. Chalice Circles are groups of 8-10 committed participants who come together once a month with a trained leader to nurture spiritual growth in community. At the beginning of each month, participants will receive a packet of materials based upon the month's worship theme (check the brochure racks or our website to see packets from November and December). From these materials, each participant chooses **one** spiritual exercise and a deep question to sit with for the course of the month. At the end of the month, participants will gather with their small group to share their experiences.

Some of our existing groups have openings and depending on registrations we will form new groups beginning in January. Email Andrea Johnson at andrea@unityunitarian.org if you'd like to join a Chalice Circle. Please indicate when you are generally available (e.g., weekday afternoon, weekday mornings, Saturday morning, Sunday afternoon, or a weeknight) and Andrea will coordinate group placement.

For more information visit the Chalice Circle website at <http://www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html>.

Open Page Writing Session

Incarnation: This Embodied Life

Sunday, December 3 • 2:00-4:00 p.m. • Anderson Library Free; RSVP requested to karen@unityunitarian.org

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? In the beginning of this very busy month of December, we pause on a Sunday afternoon to reflect on the gifts, limitations, and holiness nested within our embodied world.

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.

LIBRARY AND BOOKSTALL TEAM / ART TEAM



From Shelley Butler, Library and Bookstall Team

What were the Greek myths, the Norse sagas or the Bible itself but humans seeking to describe the astonishing universe in which they found themselves, to understand its meaning and to discern how one ought to survive in it? So it's fitting that a religious community like Unity should continue that human quest with a journal of art and literature drawn from itself.

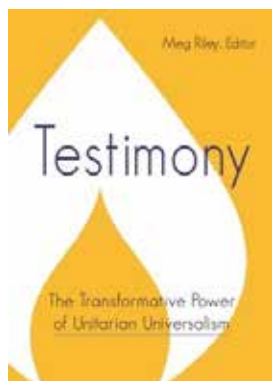
— Kathryn Oakley, Foreward from Cairns Vol. 9

See the new **Cairns Vol. 9** in all its beauty at the launch party in December. Watch *This Week at Unity* (the insert in your order of worship) and the bulletin boards for more details.

I searched online for “holiday gift ideas” and the big G returned “about” 57,700,000 results (whew). Looking around a bit, I found that mr.kennedy.com is offering limited edition 24-carat gold shoelaces for \$19,000. And good news: The gold-plated vacuum has been marked down from \$1 million to \$999,999. Let’s not even go there with the \$3.2 million diamond dog collar.

Are these not striking your fancy? Me neither.

If you're like me and like to shop for good, then why not give a Unity Bookstall Gift Certificate?



Meg Riley’s new book, *Testimony: The Transformative Power of Unitarian Universalism* is now in the Bookstall! And besides a wide-ranging selection of new, interesting and highly relevant titles, we sell both UU hymnals, *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey* — books that people often want to have at home but don’t often buy for themselves, aka great gift choices.

Buy and give a gift, and support Unity Church at the same time!

Parish Hall Artist • Richard Birger
One Nation Indivisible — becoming divisible



The December exhibit in the Parrish Hall is by Unity Church member Richard Birger. This is a different direction for Richard, who in the past has exhibited images from the American West.

These images are from a variety of recent political and social actions and events here in Minnesota. They illustrate how our society is becoming less and less cohesive and more and more tribal. Our politics reflect our view of the Social Compact. We are pulling apart.

In 2008 and 2012 Minnesota helped elect the country’s first Black President. In 2016, if you subtract all the votes cast in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, Donald Trump would have easily carried Minnesota, with 58 percent of the vote.

It is easy to love your friend, but sometimes the hardest lesson to learn is to love your enemy. — Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

What is Art Share?

The Unity Art Team invites you to spotlight YOUR art.

How it works:

- Choose your favorite piece of art — anything from your personal creation, your child’s creation, or fine art on a wall in your home.
- Your piece, along with a statement of why it’s a favorite, and a photo of you, will be displayed for two Sundays in the Art Share space in the Parish Hall.
- Sign up on the calendar on the bulletin board by the Parish Hall kitchen window. An Art Team member will contact you to confirm your dates and details.
- Art Share’s goal is to encourage members of the congregation to know each other better and to enrich the focus on art at Unity Church.

Thanks for considering participating in Art Share. The Art Team looks forward to spotlighting your art and getting to know you. Questions? Email Marty Rossmann at rossm001@umn.edu.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Ho Ho Ho

From Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries



I do believe in Santa Claus. My kids have heard me say that forever. Most of the Coming of Age and Tower Club kids have heard me say such a thing too. I'm generally spared from needing to try too hard to explain myself, as they pretty dependably give me a sympathetic smile, then politely avert their gaze as they would to avoid any crazy person they might find themselves next to on the bus.

Partly it's that I can't put any energy into not believing. When Atticus and Harper each came to me somewhere between third and fourth grade to let me know they "knew about Santa" I quickly stopped them.

"Do you really want to talk about this? Can you think of any good outcome from this conversation?" I asked. They paused, losing a little color from their faces as they thought it through.

"No, probably not."

I know I talk about Christmas a lot — common wisdom would be I talk about it too much for a Unitarian Universalist religious educator. But as long as we have an annual pageant, I feel safe continuing to do so.

I do explain my Santa thing at least a little, by asking the kids what they remember about believing. When they knew Santa Claus was good, and he was magic and all that goodness and magic was used solely to bring joy to everyone at least once a year. He listened, he was clever, and he loved us. And somehow he was wrapped up with the baby Jesus and God and that was all about love and joy, too! Hooray! And then Scrooge, and George Bailey and Clarence and the spirits come into the story as well, and people make it home against impossible odds, orphans find homes, Rudolph overcomes the storm. They do remember, and nearly all can admit to feeling something un-nameable in this holiday, a thrilling thinness in the veil between every day and something more.

And when they do, none of this sounds silly. The milk of human kindness is real and intoxicating. The spirit of everything that is holy comes down to Earth for this brief magical time and we can feel it, in every cup of egg nog latte, in every dollar pressed into the bell-ringer's pot, in the mostly good natured competition of a Carol Shout, in the willingness to connect with one another just a little bit more than usual.

Dr. Seuss says it best: "Cheer to all Whos far and near. Christmas Day is in our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp. Christmas Day will always be just as long as we have we. Welcome Christmas while we stand, heart to heart, and hand in hand."

December Ministry with Children and Youth

Religious Education

Sunday, December 3: Regular R.E., Cookie and Wreath Sale, Celebration of New Lives ceremony (RSVP required to michelle@unityunitarian.org)

Wednesday, December 6: New Family Orientation, 7:15 p.m.; final meeting of Tween and Wellspring Wednesday until January 10

Sunday, December 10: Regular R.E.; Cookies and Wreath sale

Wednesday, December 13: Santa Pause holiday childcare 5:30-8:00 p.m. (for ages 3 and older, RSVP required to michelle@unityunitarian.org)

Sunday, December 17: Family Sunday (all children worship in Sanctuary, nursery care available)

Sunday, December 24: No R.E. classes, Christmas Eve services (see page eight)

Sunday, December 31: No R.E. classes (one service 10:00 a.m.); activities for school-age kids, nursery care available

Our Whole Lives

December 13: Healthy Relationships

December 20: No class, Winter Break

December 27: No class, Winter Break

Coming of Age

December 3: Death and Loss

December 10: Death and Loss Wrap-up 3:30 p.m. with mentors, attend worship at 4:30 p.m.

December 17: No class, Winter Break Mentors/Mentees meet during break

December 25 No class, Winter Break

Save the Date: 2018 Children's Musical Parent Meeting

For the past 28 years, talented members of the Unity Church community have come together to write, compose, direct, choreograph, and perform a unique show for Unity Church. Participating in the Children's Musical has been a transformative experience for many of our young people. If you have a 6th, 7th, or 8th grader, consider whether this fun, team building experience might be right for them. To learn more, please come to the parent information session on Sunday, December 10, from 10:00-11:00 a.m., in the Choir Room. The musical is scheduled for March 1-3, 2018! Stay tuned for more information. Questions? Please contact co-producer Peggy Lin at peggy.peggylin@gmail.com.

Music Notes

From Ruth Palmer
Director of Music Ministries

*Stars over snow,
And in the west a planet
Swinging low below a star—
Look for a lovely thing and you will
find it,
It is not far—
It will never be far.*

— Sara Teasdale, from *Night*

It can be a daunting experience for any musician, amateur or professional, to hold an unknown piece of music in their hands. For singers, usually something like an 8½ by 11 inch sheet or booklet of paper filled with hundreds of notes, some in noticeable patterns, others with relationships hard to decipher. Out of this visual scribble one is supposed to make music? Or is it, learn enough to release the music in order to bring it to life? Rehearsal and practicing are, in essence, the slow journey from unfamiliar to familiar. In that process, the inherent messages embedded in those notes hopefully become that “lovely thing.” This is very far away at first, but finally (if one is looking) revealing itself to have been not just “never far away,” but there all the time.

All of our musicians are working hard to release loveliness into song. We hope you will consider joining with us, either as singers or listeners. This is our way of “looking”.

Best wishes for moments of meaningful song in this holiday season.

Interested in singing with
a choir at Unity Church on
Christmas Eve?

Turn to page nine.

What
Sweeter
Music

Saturday, December 9

Unity Church-Unitarian

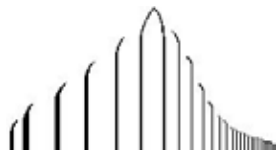
6:30 CAROL SING

7:00 HOLIDAY CONCERT

Children's Choir, Unity Singers, Unity Choir, Women's Ensemble
Wendy Tangen-Foster, violin

8:00 DESSERT BUFFET

Bring a dessert ready to serve and share.
Non-perishable food donations for the Hallie Q. Brown
food shelf will also be gratefully accepted.



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

JUSTIN CUMMINS, CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REV. JANNE ELLER-ISAACS, CO-MINISTER
REV. ROB ELLER-ISAACS, CO-MINISTER
BARBARA HUBBARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REV. LISA FRIEDMAN, MINISTER OF CONGREGATIONAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

The Gathering

Unity's Women's Retreat

Saturday, January 27, 2018 • Unity Church

Join us for a day-long retreat — including programs, food, massage, music, and spiritual practice — as we reflect on the wholeness of our lives. Recognizing that gender is not binary, this retreat is open to all individuals who self-identify as female. Registration begins Sunday, January 7 — watch for details! If you are interested in helping with The Gathering or have a class or other program you would like to propose offering at the retreat, please contact Rev. Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org.

Unity Church Men's Retreat

Saturday, February 17, 2018 • Unity Church

Are you interested in developing deeper connections with other men at Unity Church? Did you attend last year's Men's Retreat and would like to go again? Did you hear about last year's retreat and wish you had gone?

Well, here is your opportunity! On February 17, 2018, there will be an all-day Men's Retreat held at Unity Church. The theme of this retreat is "Building Heart Connections." This retreat is open to all who identify as male.

If you have any questions about this, please contact Arif Mamdani (arif@unityunitarian.org) or Steve Harper (steveharper.home@gmail.com). Hope to see you there!



Mapping Our Future, Unity's Ends renewal process, begins in January 2018. In small groups, participants will share stories about Unity Church and wishes for its future. The information gathered during these sessions will clarify the core values, mission, and goals of Unity Church through 2023 and beyond. This sacred work will provide guidance to the ministers, the Board of Trustees, and all those who call Unity Church their spiritual home. To participate in this deeply rewarding experience, please sign up to help Map Our Future. Details and a sign-up form are available on-line at www.unityunitarian.org/mission-and-ends.html.