Prayers for the Epiphany Season of Light

For the year that has come to completion, I give you thanks. Let me live this new year renewed each day by your Spirit. Allow me to serve others in your name. Fill me with joy, that I may be a channel of your grace and love. I sing to you, Lord, and come into your presence with thanksgiving every day. Amen.

Lindsay Armstrong

May the great Ruler of all high places, God of many names, Touch you with a wind that keeps you strong, For all the days to come. Amen.

From the Upper Sioux tradition

As the sun rises, Lord, let your light shine on me. Destroy the shadows about me, scatter the shadows before me, Disperse the shadows behind me, dispel the shadows within me. Let your light shine on me.

As the sun rises, Lord, let your light shine on me. The warmth of your Presence, the brightness of your love, The radiance of your joy, the shining of your hope. Let your light shine on me.

As the sun rises, Lord, let your light shine on me. Your light to guide, your light to lead, Your light to direct, your light to brighten. Let your light shine on me.

David Adams, Powerlines

A Prayer for a Child

O God of hope, shine forth with your light on (child’s name) this day. Guide their feet in your way. Amen.

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Dear Friends,

On the Joyous Sunday of Advent, my dog Nizhoni who usually stays in my office on Sunday mornings, decided to join the congregation, not once but twice. The first time was during the choir rehearsal before the service, the second was at the beginning of the Lessons and Carols service while Brad Ellingboe was teaching the congregation our part for the anthem.

Like the dinosaurs in the movie *Jurassic Park*, Nizhoni has apparently learned how to open doors. She is actually smarter than the dinosaurs. They only had to push down a handle, but she can actually jimmy the round doorknob on my office door to make her escape.

Both times she came into the sanctuary, she ignored my whispering and beckoning to her, preferring instead the company of the rest of the congregation. During the service, she finally found her way to Nyla and Larry Rasmussen (her “granddog-parents”) where quick-thinking Nyla used her Christmas scarf as a leash to capture her. While the congregation sang “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming,” she led my miscreant canine out of the Sanctuary and back to my office, from which Nizhoni promptly escaped a third time as soon as Nyla had gone back to the Sanctuary. Fortunately, videographer Elijah Marquez caught her (Nizhoni, not Nyla) in the act before she got too far.

Usually when Nizhoni escapes, she heads outdoors. That’s where Elijah looked for her in her first two sojourns. But that Sunday, she headed straight for the Sanctuary. Who could blame her? It was warm, welcoming, and where everyone was. Plus it was the Lessons and Carols service for the Joyous Sunday of Advent, so the room was beautifully adorned and filled with music.

I’m not sure Nizhoni understood the words to the carols or the text of the scripture lessons, but she knew the Sanctuary was where something important was happening and where she would be welcomed—at least by everyone but her owner (me :-). I’m generally not into anthropomorphism (i.e., attributing human traits to non-human entities), but I have to give my dog credit for reminding me of some core tenets of our faith. Nizhoni wanted to be connected—to the community and to something far more compelling than what she could find being alone in my office. My hunch is that everyone who came through the Sanctuary doors that morning was looking for the same thing—community and connection to something bigger and deeper than just our individual lives.

As we bid farewell to 2021, may we give thanks for the ways we have known that connection—with one another and with the mystery we call God—throughout this past year. As we look to 2022 and the future we share, may we be open to God’s ways of reminding us to stay connected—and to learning new ways to unlatch closed doors :-).
Worship in January

New Light for a New Year

“Epiphany”—the season after Christmas—comes from a word that means “Light.” Epiphanies are those times when the light comes on and we see something or someone in a new way. According to Matthew’s Gospel, when the Wise Ones wised up and let themselves be led by God’s Light, it guided them away from King Herod’s glitter and gold to a stable in Bethlehem. And once they had seen the Light, they chose to “go home by another way”—i.e., not go back by way of Herod but to strike out in a new direction.

How might the light come on for us? In this season of continued uncertainty, may we learn from their journey and that of others who also tried to follow the Light, even if sometimes they lost their way. Epiphany worship is a good way to begin the New Year. Plan to join in—and bring a friend (or share the virtual service :-).

Light, Earth, the Cosmos, and All the Stars
United’s Sacred Space Team
Creates New Epiphany Banner

The creative geniuses of United’s Sacred Space Team (Dana Hollifield, Donna Clark, Debbie Maloney, Nyla Rasmussen) will unveil a new Epiphany banner on Sunday, January 2. From what we’ve heard, it incorporates multiple Epiphany themes, from stardust to light eternal and back to earth again. Thank you all!

Home by Another Way
January 2

We remember the Wise Ones who let the Light lead them in a new direction (Matthew 2:1-11) and we consider how that same Light might yearn to lead us in new ways, too. We share Communion, see a new Epiphany banner for the first time, and are blessed with the string trio of Jessica, Sasha, and Jack Smucker.

Even in the Shadows
January 9

Within 40 days after Jesus’ baptism by his cousin John, King Herod had John arrested and imprisoned in the dungeon of his palace at Machaerus. John never made it out alive and probably never saw the light of day again. (Luke 3:15-22). He had baptized hundreds of people, including Jesus, into new life. Where could he have found any light or hope of life amidst the shadows of his own death? Where do we?

Sight to the Blind
Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday
January 16

In his hometown synagogue, Jesus proclaims that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him and he’s been anointed “to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.” (Luke 4:14-21) On a day when we remember Martin Luther King, Jr.’s vision of equality and freedom, the story asks us to consider what—and who—we’re still not seeing. The writings of theologian and racial justice advocate Howard Thurman can help open our eyes.

Eyes Wide Shut
January 23

Jesus tried to open his Nazareth friends and neighbors to see that God’s love extended to a poor widow of Sidon and a Syrian General with leprosy. (Luke 4:22-30) Both were people the Nazarenes didn’t like because of their class, race, nationality and/or disease. So they tried to throw Jesus off a cliff. How do we respond to God’s vision of all-encompassing love?

A Miraculous Vision of Fish
January 30

Multitudes of fish that the fisherman can’t see. An image of one’s self that blocks a vision of grace. A new way of looking at life and at God. It’s all in the story often called “The Miraculous Catch of Fish” (Luke 5:1-11), where Simon and the other fishermen catch a glimpse of what their lives could be if they caught Jesus’ vision for them.
Music Notes

Happy New Year! It is wonderful to plan music for indoor worship, to be back in the Sanctuary on the Steinway, and to hear all of you singing the congregational hymns! We kick off January with special musical offerings of some of our young people:

- Epiphany Sunday (Jan. 2), the Smucker String Trio of Jessica, Sasha and Jack play an arrangement of *We Three Kings*.
- Feb. 19-20: Mark your calendars for the United Church and Coro Lux joint *FebFest*, a weekend choral festival at the United on the theme, *There Is a Balm in Gilead*. Participate and sing in the workshop on Saturday and plan to attend worship as well as the concert on Sunday afternoon! (See Bradley Ellingboe’s column below more information.)
- Sunday, Feb. 27, the Andy Kingston Trio and family offer their wonderful jazz for the Mardi Gras Services (in-person and online!)

Wishing you all a healthy and happy New Year!

Jacquelyn

FebFest Choral Festival
Saturday, Feb. 19—Sunday, Feb. 20

Once again, United and my Albuquerque-based group, Coro Lux, are co-sponsoring a “come one, come all” Choral Festival. Previous “JanFests” were on Martin Luther King weekend, but we’ve moved the event to Black History Month and renamed it FebFest. The festival celebrates the musical and cultural contributions of African Americans. This year’s celebration, *There Is a Balm in Gilead*, runs all day Saturday, Feb. 19, and culminates with morning worship and an afternoon concert Sunday, Feb. 20. All events are at United.

The cost is $65, which includes Saturday lunch and copies of the music we’ll sing on Sunday. Proof of vaccination and masks are required for all singers.

Our guest clinician is Dr. Rosephanye Powell of Auburn University, an internationally recognized composer, conductor, and singer. An added bonus is an inspirational talk and book-signing by Richard Antoine White, about his journey from the Baltimore ghetto to a successful career in music. His new autobiography *I’m Possible* has been featured on the Today Show, and the talk shows of Jimmy Fallon and Trevor Noah.

A free-will offering at Sunday’s concert benefits NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Health.

For more information or to register, visit *abqcorolux.org*.

Brad

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

LIGHTS, CAMELS, ACTION!

Virtual Christmas Pageant a Big Success

Many thanks to all who made United’s first-ever Virtual Christmas Pageant such a grand success! Twenty kids participated as characters and readers, along with half a dozen adults. The virtual pageant premiers Sunday, Dec. 26 after the 10:00 service and will also be sent to the congregation later that day. Many thanks to all—and especially to Videographer and Editor Elijah Marquez who developed and wrote the script (with sous-chef writer Talitha Arnold :-)

Family Supper Bag—Friday, Jan. 21

Once a month, United provides a simple, possibly home-made, take-home supper for United families. That gives hard-working, juggling-everything parents a break and feeds bodies and souls of both kids and parents. This month, it’s Friday, Jan. 21. If you’d like to help by cooking or shopping, please let Talitha Arnold know.

Bilingual Children’s Bibles
Presented in January

As we begin the new year, United plans to present Children’s Bibles, written in both Spanish and English, to all our Kinders through 3rd graders. Given United’s commitment to keep people of all ages safe during the pandemic, we don’t know exactly when or how that presentation will take place, so please stay tuned!

Coming of Age in Corona-time

Initiation and Graduation Sundays in May

Youth Ministry, like every other part of life, has been a challenge in corona-time—for the youth, their families, and the church. But kids are still growing and changing and United wants to honor their life transitions. So mark your calendars for *Initiation Sunday, May 15* when we honor our nine Youth Initiates and for *Graduation Sunday, May 22*, when our four high school graduates are guest preachers.

Pray-ers for United’s Children and Youth

Are you willing to pray daily for a child in our congregation? Please join our Prayer-Child program to be paired with a child from UCSF. Those not paired up immediately will be placed on a list as new families join throughout the year. Contact Children’s and Youth Team member Gail Ansheles (608-335-4774) if you’re interested.
CARE AND CONCERN
PRAYERS FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR WORLD

Prayers of Thanks to:
➢ Everyone who is making Advent and Christmas such a wonderful and blessed time (in-person and virtually)—liturgically, visually, musically, pastorally, in education helping children know the true meaning of the season, through outreach ministries that help all of us remember the One who came to serve others, and all who help us bring God’s light, joy, and song into this world in a myriad of ways!
 ➢ To United’s Financial Wizards finishing up the Stewardship season, and counters, budget preparers.

Prayers of new life and blessings for:
➢ Cheryl Haskin and Katie Bickley, finishing up the fall semester in seminary (Cheryl at Iliff School of Theology in Denver; Katie at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, CT).

Prayers of Healing and Hope for:
➢ Keith Wood and his daughter Shawn, following the death of his wife Nan;
➢ Rev. Marti Baumer, Founding Pastor of United, recovering from a badly broken arm; Nancy Merchant, recovering from a broken foot;
➢ Persons living with various medical conditions, including Theresa Kline, Robyn Covelli, Mary Noonan, Judy Corbin’s brother-in-law;
➢ Persons dealing with the coronavirus and those who love and care for them; those who have lost loved ones due to the coronavirus; health care workers, grocery store stockers and clerks, educators, and others on the front lines;
➢ Cliff Beck, Sandy Vermillion, Eric Manske’s father, Monsignor Jerome Martinez, and others living with neurological conditions;
➢ Persons living with cancer and receiving treatment (including Jody and Peter Spalding’s daughter Anna) and those who love and care for them;
➢ Persons living with chronic pain (Jan McGough, Ed Barker, Julie Ann Grimm’s husband);
➢ Those with memory loss, and all who care for them;
➢ Persons living with addictions or mental illnesses and their families;
➢ Persons who are imprisoned and their families and loved ones;
➢ Persons caring for family members, near and far, including Dave Feldt, Rebecca Griego, DiAna Gutierrez, Sam and Molly Elkind, Pam Homer, Sherry Kelsey, Lib O’Brien, Gloria and Terry Griffin, Sam Gerberding, and others;
➢ The U.S. Midwest, recovering from the devastating tornadoes;
➢ Immigrant children, teenagers, and adults fleeing violence and poverty, seeking refuge in our country; policymakers who determine their fate;
➢ Persons speaking out and standing up for racial justice in our country and around the world;
➢ Military people and law enforcement officers, including those in our congregation;
➢ Prayers for snow in this thirsty land and for our commitment to the wise use of water;
➢ Prayers for an end to the pandemic and for policymakers making decisions about access to vaccines;
➢ Prayers for the safety and health of President Joseph Biden, Vice-President Kamala Harris, and for all entrusted with leadership;
➢ Deep prayers for our nation and for all governors, health and medical officials, and national leaders that they might have God’s vision of justice, grace, and abundant life for people and all creation.

Epiphany Service of Remembrance and Recommitment
Thursday, Jan. 6 – 12:15 to 1:00 pm
On Epiphany (Thursday, Jan. 6), United offers a midday service of remembrance of the attack on the U.S. Capitol and of recommitment to our nation’s principles of democracy and equality. All welcome.

Prayer Chain Keeps Others in Prayer
United has an email prayer chain of people who have offered to hold others in prayer, particularly in difficult times. If you would like to be part of it, please let us know. (unitedchurchsf@gmail.com)

United Church People on the Move :-) 
Ann and Ed Barker, moving to Montecito
(500 Rodeo Rd., #813, Santa Fe, NM  87505)
Phil and Becki Utigard, returning to Michigan

Congregational Care for January
On Call: John Shaffer (505) 466-4372
Food:  June Yoder (505) 503-0555
Outreach Opportunities

- **United’s Shelter Lunches and Dinners for Persons Who Are Homeless:** Each week United provides 150 meals from Felipe’s Tacos and Mucho Gourmet for Interfaith Shelter guests and 70 dinners monthly for men at St. Elizabeth and women and children at Casa Familia. You can help! (memo: “Shelter Meals”)

- **Masks and Monetary Donations for Good Shepherd Church in Navajoland:** United sends regular financial support and masks to this congregation in the heart of Diné/Navajoland. Bring masks to the church and/or send your financial contribution via USPS or online (memo: Diné).

- **Cards and Cookies for Hospital Workers!** Bring your cards of care and/or cookies to United (please list ingredients), and we promise not to eat any before taking them to hospital. Thank you!

**United Church of Christ Christmas Fund**

Many United Church of Christ retirees faithfully served low-income inner-city or rural congregations and/or communities of color, and their pensions are very low. The Christmas Fund of the UCC provides emergency grants, supplements annuities and health insurance, and sends Christmas “Thank You” checks for clergy retirees in need. This year, that need is greater than ever. To donate, go online to United’s website (unitedchurchofsantafe.org) or send a check to United Church of Santa Fe (Memo “Christmas Fund.”). Deadline for donations: Dec. 31, 2021.

**Christmas Cards for Immigrants**

In December the Immigration Task Force organized a card making/writing campaign in partnership with The Good Shepard church in Sahuarita, AZ. Most of the handmade cards had a detachable hanging ornament. Pastor Randy Mayer delivered the 130 personalized cards and 11 packages of Christmas hats/bibs for the newborns to the shelter in Nogales for their posada.

**Holiday Gift Drives of All Shapes and Sizes**

A sincere thank you, to all who supported November/December outreach efforts. Thanks to you, United

- Collected over 130 pairs of winter socks to keep the feet of Santa Fe’s homeless warm.
- Donated 100 calendars and over 600 greeting cards to our prison outreach.

**United’s Carbon Offset Program**

Now that we’re traveling more, it’s a great time to start participating in United’s Carbon Offset Fund. Track your car mileage and/or your plane flight hours and donate. Donations go to NM Interfaith Power and Light and Tree New Mexico, both addressing climate change. More info at unitedchurchofsantafe.org/post/unitedscarbonoffsetprogram.

**Compost Collection for Creation!**

United offers a compost collection service. Bring your compostable products to deposit anytime (easy access from the church parking lot) in the green bin. Also, pick up compostable garbage bags at the church. (Please do NOT deposit standard plastic bags.) Questions about what goes in the bin? Go to reunityresources.com or call Melanie Lohmann (505-617-0700). Thanks!

**Thank You’s**

Dear United,
Thank you for your support and care. It means the world to our students and families. Thank you.

Julia Bergen
Executive Director
Communities in Schools—New Mexico

To the United congregation,
Your recent gift of $264.50 demonstrates your continuing commitment to our partnership in addressing the climate crisis and caring for creation. The Board of NM-IPL is very grateful for your generosity.

Cheryl Foote
(New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light)
Adult Faith Formation

Home by Another Way
Contemplative Retreat for the New Year
Saturday, January 8 – 8:30 am to 12:00 noon
Take a few hours on a January morning to reflect on the direction of your life. The Wise Ones got lost on their journey to find God’s new light, but once they did, they found another way home. What are we looking for? Where do we get lost? How do we get back on track? Reflection, worship, silence, and solitude—a great way to begin a new year. Please sign up by Tuesday, Jan. 4 (unitedchurchsf@gmail.com; 505-988-3295). For more info, please speak with Talitha. All welcome!

Sunday Forums to Resume
As more people get vaccinated and also as the church has upgraded its HVAC and air purification systems, we hope to resume Sunday Forums on regular basis. If you’d like to be involved in the Adult Faith Formation Team and/or help plan forums and other study opportunities, please speak with Larry Rasmussen (505-231-0993) or Talitha Arnold (505-988-3295).

STUDY AND FELLOWSHIP GROUPS
(In-person, Inside)
All participants must sign up by 5:00 pm the day before the group meeting at unitedchurchsf@gmail.com. Masks and vaccination confirmation required. Thank you!

Wednesday Women’s Study Group
Jan. 5 and 19 (10:00 am)
All women are invited to join the discussion of The Light of Days by Judith Batalion. (Marcia Gardner: 505-670-5186, marcia.chavez3@gmail.com)

Pretty Good Guys
Wednesdays, Jan. 12 and 26 (10:30 am – noon)
All men welcome! We get know one another by talking about our lives and spiritual journeys. (Ken Bordner: ken.bordner2@gmail.com, 585-734-4548)

Resiliency and Hope: Strengthening Our Souls
Thursday Mornings at 8:00 (MDT) on Zoom
Exercise your mind and your soul every Thursday morning by exploring the scripture stories for the upcoming Sunday. Join in to deepen your faith and share the journey. All welcome!

Stewardship

Thank You for
“Living Generously, Connecting Deeply!”
We’re Almost to the Stewardship Goal
Our 2022 Stewardship Campaign comes to a close January 15. As of December 15, 148 people had generously pledged for a total of $465,155 (almost to the $550,000 goal). Heartfelt thanks to all who’ve pledged thus far! You’re making a difference.

If you’ve yet taken the opportunity to pledge, please consider how God has blessed you, and give from those blessings. Every gift, great or small, makes a difference! You can pick up a pledge card at the church or email your pledge to unitedchurchsf@gmail.com. Thank you!

Don’t File Your Taxes Yet!
Please wait to file your income tax returns until you receive your contributions receipt from the church that we plan to mail by the end of January. Questions? Please call the church (988-3295).

Consider ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS for Your 2022 Pledge
It’s simple and easy to set up your pledge as an electronic contribution from your checking account, savings account or credit card. Call the church (505-988-3295) for the authorization form.

Year-End Giving
To claim a charitable deduction for 2021, donations must be received or postmarked by Dec. 31, 2021. Checks received after Dec. 31 cannot qualify for a charitable deduction for 2021, even if predated 2021. (Sorry!) To contribute online, go to unitedchurchsf@gmail.com and click “Donate Now.” Many thanks!

Chamber Music Concert
Sunday, Feb. 6 – 5:30 pm
Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

Unite
WELCOME TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE

The United Church of Santa Fe invites you to join us as we grow in faith and hope. We are a part of the United Church of Christ, a progressive and inclusive Christian tradition that historically emphasized freedom of thought and belief as well as a commitment to the community. As Christians, we are many individual members, each with different gifts to offer and contributions to make. We are also one body in Christ, members of one another.

As an expression of the practice and conviction of this congregation, we declare ourselves to be an “open and affirming church,” welcoming people who share a faith journey with Christ and who share with us the covenant that binds us together regardless of age, gender, race and ethnic background, mental or physical disability, or sexual orientation. We welcome you!

BOTH RECORDED AND INDOOR WORSHIP SERVICES OFFERED

United (even apart) Church is also United (indoors) Church! We’ll continue to offer the recorded worship services and also a 10:00 am Sunday service indoors. The two services are similar in content but with different music. For the indoor service, please register by noon each Friday. Proof of vaccination (except if unable to be vaccinated due to age or medical condition) and masks required. You can keep your vaccination confirmation on file at the church. Email unitedchurchsf@gmail.com for more information.