

Monthly publication
 United Church of Santa Fe
 Santa Fe, New Mexico
 February 2025

A MONTH OF PRAYERS FOR . . .

Groundhog Day February 2

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
 O Lord my God, you are very great.
 You make the clouds your chariot.
 You set the earth on its foundations.
 You create high mountains as a home for wild goats.
 The rocks are a refuge for groundhogs.
 O Lord, how great are your works!
 Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!
 (from Psalm 104)

Valentine's Day February 14

For the wonders that astound us,
 For the truths that still confound us,
 Most of all, that love has found us,
 Thanks be to God.
 (Fred Pratt Green)

Presidents' Day February 17

Today we remember people of stature and vision who led our nation in the past. We thank you for their wisdom and courage. We pray, too, that you bestow those same gifts on those in leadership in our time. Give them your commitment to justice and compassion for all people and all creation. Give them your love that overcomes fear. Help us all to walk in your ways. Amen.

The Sunday of the Congregational Budget Meeting

You have blessed us, God,
 to be a blessing in the lives of others.
 Bless us with your wisdom and compassion
 so our decisions offer such blessings abundantly.

Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) Sunday March 2

On this mountain God will make a feast for all peoples,
 a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
 of rich food filled with marrow.
 God will swallow up death forever,
 and wipe away tears from every eye.
 Thank you, Lord,
 for the ways you feed our deep hungers with your deep love.
 (Prophet Isaiah, 25:6-10)

For Children (and the rest of us)

Bless (child's name) with your love, O Lord.
 May every experience they have of love
 be an experience of Your love. Amen.

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**UNITED CHURCH
OF SANTA FE**

A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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**Covenant of
The United Church of Santa Fe**

In the Lord's name we gather together
here in Santa Fe
to worship and grow in the Christian
tradition,
to minister in love to all persons,
to strive for justice and peace,
to respond to God's word.

We celebrate the heritage of Santa Fe
and give ourselves to its challenges
and opportunities.

We endeavor to live in harmony with
all creation as stewards of the earth.

We share in the life and mission of
the United Church of Christ and of
Christians everywhere.

To these purposes we unite and
covenant with God and one another,
watchful for the guidance
of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor's Message

Dear Friends,

"My spiritual life is as tough as an old boot," writes Choctaw Elder/Episcopal Bishop Steven Charleston. "I bet yours is too. That's because we use them. Not just in the peaceful times of our lives, but when the going gets rough. Spiritual life is a collection of tools, meant to work for us, meant to take on the hard jobs of life. Life is a construction site. Love, the labor we invest each day."

A spiritual life as a construction site. What a great metaphor—for the life of faith, individually and also as a church, especially one like United.

United people know a lot about construction sites, since we've been through a lot of building projects over the last 45 years—the 1983 very small Sanctuary and multipurpose room; 1987 Lizard House storage space-turned-Youth-Room for a decade; 1989 Learning Center; 1994 Temporary Modular Unit (aka trailer) for infants and toddlers; 1998 Community Room and Nurture Center; 2001 Sanctuary and Office expansion; and 2018 Education Wing that we finished just before the pandemic shut everything down.

We've lived through a lot of re-construction projects, too—a new roof three years after the first building was finished and rebuilding the adobe wall and replacing windows a few years later. There's also been the landscape construction, a multi-year project that is still a work-in progress.

For the United community, life has been a constant construction site. But it hasn't all been stick, stucco, and stone. Taking a lesson from Msrg. Jerome Martinez—the founding pastor of Santa Maria de la Paz who also restored St. Francis Cathedral as a building and a vibrant faith community in the early 2000's—we've sought to build the United community and our ministries of education, care, music, and partnerships with the wider community even as we painted walls, hammered nails, and replaced windows.

Five years ago, United—like every other faith community—had to undertake another kind of building project, namely the construction of a "virtual church," for which there was definitely no blueprint or master plan. Then we built "outside church," and then "hybrid church."

In 2025, United continues to be a construction site as we face a different future than we expected pre-pandemic 5 years ago. We also face a future that has much uncertainty. But as United has done for over four decades, we will keep building on the foundation of faith, hope, and love upon which this church was founded and that has been strengthened with each generation. Steven Charleston affirms that the "spiritual life is a collection of tools," and United has a lot to work with—starting with our life of worship, song, and prayer together (which one could call "the buckle of our toolbelt" :-).

I give thanks for United's firm foundation. I give thanks for all of you and those who have gone before us to build this church, inside and out, spiritually and literally. Most of all, I give thanks to the Master Builder and for the tools of faith, hope, and love for us to use this year and all the years to come.

Blessings,

Worship in February

The Waters of New Life

Epiphany is a season of surprises. Epiphanies are revelations, when the light comes on and we see ourselves or the world in a new way. Epiphanies are also experiences of new life, so water is also a symbol for this season. We began in January with Jesus' baptism, as people began to recognize God was doing a new thing through him in this world. In February, we continue our year's exploration of our Biblical faith and the book of Creation with a focus on God's "waters of new life."

8:30 Contemplative Communion — 10:00 Sanctuary Service with Choir and special music
Online services continue, too!

Love as Deep as the Ocean February 2

The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians (and us) the nature and demand of God's love—that love is patient, kind, enduring. (I Cor. 13). In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells his Nazareth homeboys the full extent of God's love, and they want to throw him off a cliff. (Luke 4:21-30) And we thought living into God's love would be easy. (We share Communion in both services.)

God's Love: Trust It Enough to "Put Out into the Deep" February 9 – FebFest Sunday

Isaiah experienced God's call while at prayer in the temple. (Isaiah 6:1-13) Simon Peter experienced it after a long and empty night of fishing. (Luke 5:1-11) Both the not-yet-prophet and not-yet-disciple have to "put out into the deep"—i.e., deep trust of God's love to do what God is calling them to do. It's scary to go that deep in any relationship. But it's the only way to go. We welcome FebFest guest Dr. Brandon Boyd in worship and to share his experience of "putting into the deep" as a composer and conductor.



God's Love: Sturdy Against the Storm February 16

A life built on the rock or built on the sand? That's the choice Jesus laid out to his listeners—and to us. (Luke 6:46-49). He also promised that God's love is strong enough to withstand wind, rain, and all the storms of life. How do we trust that promise?



God's Love: Poured Out Like Tears February 23

An unnamed "woman of the street" disrupts a dinner party by pouring precious oil over Jesus' feet and wiping them with her tears. (Luke 7:30-8:3) What a mess! The religious leader hosting the dinner is indignant, but Jesus' praises the woman for the love she poured out for him and over him. Have we ever been that lavish with our love? Or that courageous? A great story for the Sunday of the Congregational Budget Meeting.

Mardi Gras Sunday – March 2

We welcome the Jazz Pianist Andy Kingston for our Annual Mardi Gras celebration. Put on your beads and shine your dancing shoes! It's also a great service to bring friends!



Music

Bradley Ellingboe, Director of Music

Children & Youth

Karen Wilbanks, Chair

It's once again a busy season for our music ministry. On the second weekend of February, we'll be in the midst of our 7th annual FebFest, this time featuring nationally known Dr. Brandon Boyd from the University of Missouri. The FebFest workshop (Sat., Feb. 8—8:30 to 4:00, followed by a 4:00 free community concert) is open to all people who love to sing! (To register: abqcorolux.org/febfeast-2025/) Besides the day-long workshop and concert on Saturday, Feb. 8, Brandon will be with us in church Sunday morning, helping to lead worship from the piano.

The FebFest workshop also includes a workshop on vocal technique, offered by Soprano Amy Owens, and the 4:00 concert starts with a conversation with Dr. Boyd and Cecilia Webb, host of KUNM's "Train to Glory," a Sunday morning all-Gospel program.

The start of 2025 also brought two new hires to the music program. First, Dr. Michelle Schumann (no relation to the famous composer!) is our new pianist. Her wonderful playing, deep knowledge of repertoire, and sunny disposition are blessings to us all! And though Steven Kerchoff will continue to sing with the choir, he wanted to be relieved of his duties as Choral Scholar. Thus, we've welcomed Javier Ortiz to our ensemble. I've known Javier since his student days and watched with pride as he's evolved into a fine professional bass singer. Welcome Michelle and Javier!

Finally, mark your calendars for Saturday, April 12, when our Sanctuary Choir joins *Coro Lux* in singing my dramatic cantata "A Place Called Home" at the Lensic Theater. More on that in next month's article.

See you in church,

Brad



Choral Workshop and Concert of African American Sacred Music Saturday, February 8



Dr. Brandon Boyd
Composer, Soloist, and Professor
of Choral Activities
University of Missouri



Cecilia Webb
KUMN's "Train to Glory" Host

For info and to register: abqcorolux.org/febfeast-2025/

Celebrate! Celebrate! Children's Ministry in February

Children's advocate and friend Fred Rogers said that his mother told him that when bad things happened or the world seemed scary, "look for the helpers." This month United's kids celebrate lots of different helpers of all different backgrounds, times, doing all kinds of things. They also learn how they can be helpers, too!



Feb. 2

Celebrating Prayer: "Learning to Pray for Others"
(The Lord's Prayer and Prayer Bracelets)

Feb. 9

**Celebrating First Responders:
"Giving Thanks for Others"**
(Decorating cookies for our Firefighters)

Feb. 16 and 23

**Celebrating Women of the Bible
(they helped in amazing ways!)**



SOUPER BOWL FAMILY NIGHT Friday, Feb. 21 – 5:30 pm

All United families, individuals, couples, adults, kids, youth are invited to join in the Souper Bowl Family Night. Bring a family-sized can or cans of soup for the Food Depot. United provides soup, bread, and dessert—and special activities (maybe even a "Soup Slurping" contest) (just kidding). Sign up at church or by email: unitedchurchsf@gmail.com.

Youth Events in the Works

As this newsletter goes to print, we're trying to coordinate the very full schedules of United's Youth to find dates and times for a retreat to Ghost Ranch, a day trip up Sandia, and/or other possibilities around town. Stay tuned!



CARE AND CONCERN

PRAYERS FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR WORLD



Prayers of Thanks to:

- **Karen Wilbanks**, Children/Youth Ministry Chair, who organized the Epiphany Readers' Theater, along with Storytellers **Jennifer Graves** and **Craig Hay**, and all the kids and parents who made it such a grand Sunday.
- **Congregational Care Team (led by John Shaffer)** for delivering Christmas flowers to over 40 United members and friends who are shut-in or going through other difficulties.
- **Moderator Sarah Sawtell, Stewardship/Finance Chair Trudy Swint, Council member Bob Ansheles**, and all who are helping wrap up the 2025 Stewardship campaign and develop the 2025 operating budget.

Congratulations and Blessings for:

- **Robyn Roessel and Sean Valenzuela**, who were married Jan. 4 by Talitha at Robyn's sister Jacquelyn's home in Santa Ana Pueblo.
- **Lucas Levi Bromfield**, his parents Eva and Cameron, grandparents Jan and Kitty Jansen, following his baptism on the first Sunday of Christmastide.

Healing and Hope for:

- **Mary Roessel and Joe Neidhardt, and the whole Roessel family**, following the death of Mary's younger brother Monty, and for the Diné College community where Monty was president; the family and friends of **Lydia Madrick**, following the death of her husband Allen on Christmas Eve; **Merry Converse** and family, following the death of her husband **Al Converse** (also, Merry is now under hospice); the families and loved ones of former United members **Charlotte Mathes** (Florida) and **Annie Wright** (Oregon) both of whom died in early January.
- **Dana Hollifield**, awaiting thyroid and lymph node surgery, Jan. 29; **Jen Wilkison** and her family (including parents **Dave Wilkison and Nancy Witter**) as she deals with Stage 4 liver cancer; **George Duncan (and Sherry Kelsey)** recovering from a corneal transplant; **Jennifer Walters and Jim Mills**, both recovering from Covid, and others also dealing with difficult health issues (**Sally Strong, Blanca Surgeon's mother, Ray and Nancy Lutz, Rafaelita Bachicha, Rev. Kathleen Jimenez, Maria Navarette**, and others).
- Others living with cancer and those who love and care for them (**Greg and Linda Gaertner, Anna Spalding, Diane Bethune's brother Jeffery**, and others).
- Those with memory loss and all who care for them (including **Royce and Carolyn Stewart, Rev. Christine and Paul Vogel, Rev. Roger and Linda Knapp**, and others); persons living with Parkinson's or other neurological conditions, (**Sandy Vermillion, Monsignor Jerome Martinez, Dr. Karl Ray**, and others); or with chronic illness (**Brooke Roberts, Jan McGough**, and others), those in assisted living (**Rhae Burden, Carol Ingells and Robert Spitz, Helen Wagner**, and others).
- Individuals and families dealing with mental health, suicidal issues, and/or addiction issues. (If you or someone you love is struggling emotionally, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (988) provides 24/7, free, confidential support and crisis resources for people in distress.)
- Persons who are imprisoned and those who love them.
- The people and all creation dealing with the **ongoing danger and aftermath of the California fires**.
- Immigrants and asylum seekers at the U.S. border and those in our country, all facing uncertain futures.
- The people of Israel and Palestine, and Jews, Palestinians, and other Muslims living in the U.S. as war and violence continue; government and military leaders in Israel/Palestine, as well as the U.S. and other countries who need God's wisdom, guidance, and commitment to a just peace.
- Continued prayers for Nigeria, Sudan, Ukraine, Central America, and other places also impacted by war; immigrants seeking asylum from violence; **policymakers** who determine their fate.
- Military people and law enforcement officers, including those in our congregation.

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)



Congregational Care for February



On Call: Cheryl Haskin (503) 351-6561
Food: June Yoder (505) 503-0555

Outreach

LOVE GOD, NEIGHBOR, CREATION

Outreach Opportunities – Thank you!

Go online to unitedchurchofsantafe.org or send a check to 1804 Arroyo Chamiso, Santa Fe NM 87505.

United's Outreach Giving Totals \$96,970 in 2024

United Church members and friends, in Santa Fe and across the country, gave over \$96,000 this past year to “love God by loving our neighbor and God’s creation.”

Over \$19,000 went to the United Church of Christ, regionally and nationally, as well as to special offerings (One Great Hour of Sharing, Christmas Fund) and local congregations in need.

The remainder went to both local and international partners to provide support and supplies for Ukrainian, Gazan, and Sudanese refugees, Roots (the Palestinian/Israeli peace initiative), Navajo/Diné relief, regular meals for guests of Santa Fe shelters, gift cards for public schools families in need, legal aid for immigrants, books and social workers for public school kids, support for composting, carbon offset for climate advocacy, hurricane, fire, and other climate catastrophe relief, and financial assistance for members and friends facing medical or other emergency needs.

In addition, United’s outreach efforts are supported by extensive staff and volunteer involvement. A detailed report of outreach giving will be provided in the Feb. 23 Congregational Budget Meeting.

Thank you all, near and far, who made such generosity possible! And who will continue it into the future as we are called to “Love God, Love Neighbor, Love Creation.”

Compassionate Christmas Gift Market

Thanks to the generosity of the United congregation and friends, far and near, the 2024 Compassionate Christmas gifts raised \$11,650 for:

- New Mexico Immigrant Law Center: \$1,985
- Santa Fe Shelters for the Homeless (Casa Familia, St. Elizabeth, Interfaith Shelter, Youth Shelter): each received \$631.25, totaling \$2,525
- Church World Service Blankets: \$992.50
- CWS Refugee Hygiene Kits: \$622.50
- Roots Palestinian/Israeli initiative bringing youth together: \$1,205
- Youth Immersion Trip: \$1,205
- Communities in Schools: \$1,435
- Bilingual Education for Central America: \$1,085
- Santa Fe Watershed Association for student field trips: \$595

LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOR!

United's Shelter Supper Ministries

Help provide supper for guests of St. Elizabeth, Casa Familia Family, and Interfaith Shelters by volunteering, or financially with an online donation or check (memo: shelter meals). Thank you!

- **Fri., Feb. 21 – Chop & Grate (9:30 am)** at United.
- **Mon., Feb. 24** – Deliver food to shelters.
- Make meatloaf at home (12 loaves needed).

Supporting Our Diné/Navajo Brothers and Sisters

Your financial support for United’s long-time partner, Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, in Fort Defiance, AZ. It underwrites basic supplies for families as well as the Youth Traditional Garden and Food Bank.



LOVE GOD, LOVE CREATION!

Compost Collection – It’s a Miracle!

United contracts with Reunity Resources to turn compostable products (food waste, meat scraps, etc.) into rich, life-giving compost. Pick up compostable garbage bags at the church (**NO** standard plastic bags, please), fill them at home, and bring back to put in the green bin by the Children’s Garden. More things in compost bins means less in landfills. Thanks!

Care for Creation and Offset Your Carbon Use

United’s “Carbon Offset Program” helps plant trees and change policies to address climate change. It’s simple to do: track your car mileage and/or plane flight hours and donate through United to our partners *Tree New Mexico* and *NM Interfaith Power and Light*. Info: unitedchurchofsantafe.org/creation-care. (In 2024, United donated \$3,300, part of which came from individuals and the other part from the church’s operating budget to offset carbon use of staff mileage.)

Adult Faith Formation

ADULT FORUMS — Sundays at 11:15 am
Joan Snider, Adult Faith Formation Chair

Reading Bonhoeffer in America 2025
Jan. 26; Feb. 2, 16; Mar. 2

Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics, Larry Rasmussen is a leading scholar in the witness and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and pastor who was part of the Resistance movement against the Nazis and who paid for his actions with his life. This winter, Larry leads a series based on an essay Bonhoeffer wrote four months before his arrest by the Gestapo as a Christmas gift to his co-conspirators and his family. He focused on what the resisters and their supporters had learned in fighting fascism for ten years and what the experience has told them about their people and themselves. Copies of the essay are available in the Community Room.

***Facing the Future with Faith:
United's Challenges and Opportunities Ahead***
February 9

In the Covenant of the United Church of Santa Fe, we promise to give ourselves to the “challenges and opportunities” of our life and ministry together. 2025 has a mixture of both. United also has a long history of building on faith, hope, and love. This forum is a chance to hear about some of those opportunities and challenges as we face the future with faith. All welcome!

Congregational Mid-Winter Budget Meeting
February 23

Join the Congregational Budget Meeting! Learn how United funds all of our ministries, from children and youth to worship and music to outreach and maintaining the building and grounds. We'll also discuss (and hopefully, approve :-)) the proposed 2025 United Ministries Budget (copies available Sunday, Feb. 16). Thank you in advance for your participation!

Groups and Gatherings

Wednesday Women's Study Group
Feb. 5 and 19 - 10:00 am

We study Tiya Miles' *Wild Girls* and begin *James* by Percival Everett. All women welcome! For more info, contact Jenn Wynn (home@wynnes.us, 817-219-0707) or Cheryl Morton (mommorton@gmail.com, 515-240-4523,).



Pretty Good Guys Explore
“The Greatest Prayer”
Jesus' Revolutionary Message
in the Lord's Prayer

Wednesdays, Feb. 12 & 26 (10:30 am)

Join with other United men to engage a challenging book by John Dominic Crossan about the central prayer of the Christian faith. All welcome! (Talitha Arnold, 505-988-3295)

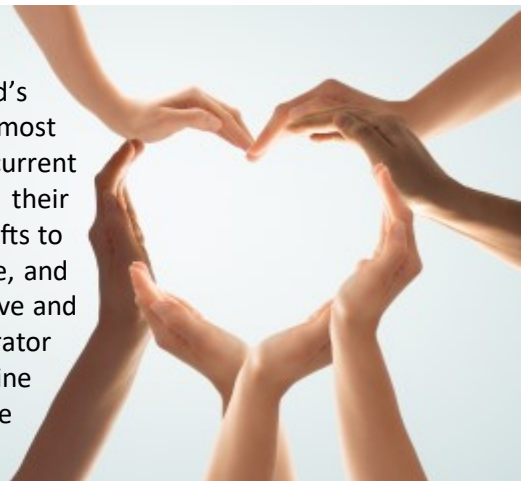
Resiliency and Hope:
Good News from The Gospel of Mark
Thursdays 8:00 am (MT) on Zoom

As we start a new year, what does a Gospel that's 2000+ years old have to offer us in our time? Quite a lot actually! Join this weekly Zoom study to deepen your faith and share the journey. People tune in from all around the country.



Founded in Faith, Building in Love Endowment 2024 Report

Thanks to the generosity and commitment of many people, United's “Founded in Faith, Building in Love” Endowment Initiative added almost \$60,000 to the church's Endowment fund in 2025, bringing the current value of the endowment to \$1,949,810. Others added United to their estate planning, paid on their 3-year pledges or made new gifts. Gifts to the Endowment lay a solid financial foundation for United's future, and we are grateful. For information about United's Endowment Initiative and how you can participate, Endowment Chair Frank Wilbanks, Moderator Sarah Sawtell, and the Endowment Initiative Committee (Caroline Burnett, Ed Barker, Trudy Swint, Bob Ansheles, Sam Elkind, Joe Jones, Talitha Arnold) are glad to talk with you. Thank you!



**THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE
A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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 emphasizes freedom of thought and belief as well as a commitment to **“Love God, Neighbor, and Creation.”** 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!

IN-PERSON AND LIVESTREAM WORSHIP SERVICES OFFERED

United Church is also United (in-person and online) Church! We offer the **10:00 am Sunday service in-person** and also **livestreamed online** (access it on United’s website: unitedchurchofsantafe.org). We also offer an **8:30 am Contemplative Communion Service**. For indoor events, N95 masks are recommended. For more information about United’s programs, please call 505-988-3295, send an email to unitedchurchsf@gmail.com, go to our website. Thank you!