



PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS FOR A MONTH WITH . . .

Groundhog Day February 2

But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

The Book of Job, 12:7-8

Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) Feb. 13

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm 34:8

Valentine's Day Feb. 14

*Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.*

Song of Songs

Ash Wednesday Feb. 14

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10

Presidents' Day Feb. 19

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.

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.

Monthly publication

United Church of Santa Fe
Santa Fe, New Mexico

February 2024

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**UNITED CHURCH
OF SANTA FE**

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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,

Four years ago this February, a new disease called the coronavirus made its way into national, global, and local news. I doubt any of us had a clue as to how much covid would turn our lives, our church, and this world upside down. What started with recommendations to wash our hands for 20 seconds (while singing "Happy Birthday") and maybe wear a mask led to emergency hospital tents, school closures, and hundreds of thousands of deaths nationally and millions across the globe.

Perhaps like you, I had no clue as to how long "coronacrisis" would last, or its impact on our personal lives or our life together, as families and friends, as a nation, and as a congregation.

Two years ago, the United Church of Santa Fe was asked to be a part of a five-year nationwide study of 300 congregations focused on the long-term impact of the pandemic on their life and ministry. Sponsored by the Lilly Foundation and the Hartford Institute, the EPIC ("Exploring the Impact of the Pandemic on Congregations") program has also included a survey of 1,700 clergy of a variety of backgrounds and across denominations, from evangelical to progressive.

As we look to our own church's future, the EPIC study can help us understand our challenges and opportunities. In the 11:15 Sunday Forum on January 28, we'll share an overview of the EPIC findings. We'll also take time to reflect on our own experiences, individually and as a congregation. I hope you'll plan to join in!

To prime the pump for the Jan. 28 Forum, I invite you to take time to consider some questions:

- As you look back to February 2020, how has your own life changed?
 - What have been the losses, due to the pandemic or otherwise?
 - What do you miss or even grieve?
 - At the same time, what new life have you experienced, either because of the pandemic or for other reasons?
 - What do you give thanks for over the last 4 years?
- What changes have you experienced in the life and ministry of United Church (or other churches, if you're new to United) in the last 4 years?
 - What has remained the same?
 - What do you miss or grieve?
 - What new life—either in terms of ministries or spirit—has United known since February 2020?
- Finally, how has the pandemic and other changes of the past four years changed your understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

If you want to share your thoughts prior to the January 28 Forum, please write me at unitedchurch.talitha@gmail.com. And put both worship and the Forum on your calendar, as we begin to lay the foundation for the future to which God calls us as a church and calls each of us individually as followers of Jesus. Thank you!

Blessings,



Worship in February

Desert Faith, Not-for-the-Fainted-Hearted Faith Heartful Faith, Steadfast Faith

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

Renewed in the Desert, Renewed in the Dark – Feb. 4

Even Jesus needed time off. The Gospel of Mark (1:29-39) says that early in his ministry, after teaching and healing people with all kinds of physical and mental afflictions, Jesus got up “while it was still very dark” and went to a deserted place to pray. (I would have gone to a spa :-). In the desert—a place seen as hostile to life—and in deep darkness, Jesus found new life and light. This Christian faith is so very odd.

Not for the Faint-Hearted **Mardi Gras Sunday – Feb. 11**

“Faith,” said Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “is taking the first step, even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” The disciples Peter, James, and John must have had that kind of “take the first step” faith when they followed Jesus up a mountain, not knowing where they were going or what they would find at the top. Along the way, they must have also realized such faith wasn’t for the faint of heart. The Andy Kingston Trio leads the way in this musical morning for all ages!



Fools for Love **Lent Begins on Valentine’s Day**

Three days after Mardi Gras Sunday, we start Lent on Valentine’s Day (aka Ash Wednesday)! The music shifts to minor keys and the Sanctuary colors change to a somber purple—not rose red. It’s a time of letting go, even fasting from things like chocolate. What kind of faith is this? One that leads to love that never ends and the new life of Easter.

Return with All Your Heart **Ash Wednesday – Feb. 14**

12:00 Noon and 7:00 pm Services

Valentine’s Day and Ash Wednesday—what could they possibly have in common? Love, for one thing. Or perhaps the only real thing. “Create in me a clean heart,” asked the Psalmist, “and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10) “Return to me,” God pled through the Prophet Joel, “with all your heart.” (Joel 2:12) In both services, we turn back to ashes the things that keep us from turning back to God. Childcare is offered at 7:00 pm. Older children and youth are invited to share in this powerful ritual.



The One Who Knew Steadfast Love **First Lent – Feb. 18**

Steadfast—another word for faithful. In Psalm 25, the composer uses “steadfast” three times to describe God’s love. I wonder if Jesus recited the psalm—or at least the phrase “steadfast love”—to himself during his 40 days in the wilderness when it was easy to doubt such love. (Mark 1:9-15) I wonder if being rooted in the steadfast love of God is what enabled him to offer such love to others.



The One Who Sang **Second Lent – Feb. 25** **Guest Preacher Dr. Anton Armstrong**

Jesus the carpenter’s son. Jesus the Healer. The Teacher. The Singer? The gospels don’t identify Jesus as a tenor or bass, but in the wilderness, he quoted psalms (aka songs) to the Tempter. He would have regularly celebrated the Sabbath with songs of thanks. And at the end of the meal on the last night of his life, he and his disciples “sang a hymn and went out into the darkness.” This Sunday, we welcome Dr. Anton Armstrong, Professor of Music and Conductor of the world-renowned St. Olaf Choir, as our guest in worship (part of the FebFest24 weekend). With United’s Director of Music Bradley Ellingboe, we’ll share a “trialogue sermon” on the role of music in faith, and particularly African American sacred music. It promises to be a great morning!

Music

Worship life continues apace! February brings us two guest pianists. First, I am delighted to say Jacquelyn Helin subs for Jessie when she takes some vacation days in February. And second, Andy Kingston helps us give Epiphany a fine sendoff on Mardi Gras Sunday, February 11.

Lent comes early this year. There are special services on Ash Wednesday, February 14, and from there we are in Lent.

Finally, FebFest 2024 takes place Saturday and Sunday, February 24 and 25. As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, I am particularly enthused about this year's festival because it will feature one of my oldest friends, Dr. Anton Armstrong of St. Olaf College.

Now in its 6th year, FebFest is a collaboration between my Albuquerque chorus, *Coro Lux*, and the United Church. The FebFest chorus consists of non-auditioned singers who participate in the Saturday workshops and rehearsals and then offer a Sunday concert, which always benefits a worthy cause. I hope you will consider participating as a singer or attending the final concert! Visit abqcorolux.org/febfeast-2024/ for more details.

Bradley Ellingboe
Director of Music



Children & Youth



"I Hear Music in the Air"

A Celebration of African American Sacred Music

Choral Workshop—Saturday, Feb. 24 Concert—Sunday, Feb. 25

Internationally known Conductor Anton Armstrong leads FebFest2024 the weekend of Feb. 24-25 at United. Saturday is an all-day Saturday Choral Workshop & Rehearsal at United. Sunday's 2:00 pm concert is at Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Church (freewill offering for Santa Fe BookKids and Albuquerque's Grief Center). Jointly sponsored by United Church with Albuquerque's Coro Lux, FebFest is open to all singers (no audition needed) and will be offered both in-person and online. To register: abqcorolux.org/febfeast-2024/. For more info, speak with either Brad Ellingboe or Talitha Arnold.

Music in the Air—Coro Lux Concert of African American Sacred Music

Sunday, Feb. 18 – 4:00 pm—African American Cultural Center (Albuquerque)

The *Coro Lux* Oratorio and Chamber Choruses, directed by Bradley Ellingboe with soloist Stevie Springer, and *El Faro* Youth Chorus, directed by Gabrielle Dietrich, offer a concert of African American music at Albuquerque's African American Cultural Center. Info and tickets: abqcorolux.org/tickets/. To carpool from United, please sign up in Community Room or call 505-988-3295.

Children's Ministry This Month

Learning to Love God by Loving Neighbor and Creation

Feb. 4

God Loves Us

so We Can Love Others

Jesus was always feeding people to show them God's love. The children make pretzel treats for the congregation 😊

Feb. 11

Mardi Gras Sunday

Everyone (including kids) joins in the celebration!



Feb. 18

Journey of Lent Begins

Lent "calendars" to keep track of the days to Easter, One Great Hour of Sharing Offering boxes, and planting paper white bulbs to learn how we're rooted in God's love.

Feb. 25

God Loves Us through Creation

For 40 days, Jesus learned about God's love from the desert all around him. We'll take a nature walk today to learn the same.

Mar. 3, 10, and 17

God's Disciples: Then and Now



Youth Ministry

February's Youth Ministry is a work in progress as of this time. Our middle and high school youth continue to help lead worship and join in United's service projects.



CARE AND CONCERN

PRAYERS FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR WORLD



Prayers of Thanks to:

- All who had a hand (no pun intended) in the Epiphany Puppet Pageant (the children and their parents; Children/Youth volunteers Karen Wilbanks, Gail Ansheles, Caleb Omolo; children's assistant Maria Navarette; and Videographer/film wizard Elijah Marquez).
- **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.
- **Treasurer Sam Elkind, Moderator Sarah Sawtell, Stewardship/Finance Chair Trudy Swint, Council member Bob Ansheles,** and all who are helping wrap up the 2024 Stewardship campaign and develop the 2024 operating budget.

Congratulations and Blessings for:

- **Katie Rountree**, newly appointed Development Director for the Santa Fe Symphony and Chorus.
- **Thomas Charles Alexander**, his parent Kayla and Raymond, great-grandmother Judy Corbin, and his whole family following this baptism on Epiphany.
- **Luke Griffin and Meredith Cockman** (and grandmother **Lauren Smith**), expecting a son in January.

Prayers of Thanks for:

- The life of long-time member **Yvonne Fairchild**, who died on Christmas Eve. Yvonne and her late husband George were active in helping United start Habitat for Humanity in Santa Fe and early volunteers in United's Partnership with Salazar School (now Communities in School). Prayers also for her daughter Anne, son Tim and the rest of the family.
- The life and work of journalist **Gustav Richard Niebuhr**, religion writer for the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and other papers, who was a good friend and guest preacher on occasion with United.

Healing and Hope for:

- **David and Joan Doolittle**, whose daughter-in-law Nancy died in December; **Geri and Emily Glover**, following the death of Geri's mother and Emily's grandmother on Christmas Day; **Jody and Peter Spalding**, attending memorial services for Jody's brother; **Brooke Roberts and Lee Swanson**, following the death of Brooke's mother; **Rev. JeanAnn Swope** following the death of her husband Rev. Jim Mechem.
- **Janyth and Ferol Fell**, as Janyth deals with difficult health issues; **J.D. and Jenn Wynne**, as he deals with health issues; **Ann Barker**, recovering from a heart attack; **Barb Rand**, Lee Rand's mother, recovering from hip surgery due to a fall; **Donna Clark**, recovering from back surgery; **Dave Tedlock and Anne Hillerman**, as Dave recovers from heart surgery; and others facing health uncertainty.
- Others living with cancer and those who love and care for them (**Greg and Linda Gaertner**, **Prof. David Daniels**, **Tim Gauthier**, **Anna Spalding**, **Diane Bethune's brother Jeffery**, **Jenn and J.D. Wynn's daughter-in-law Kayla**, and others).
- Those dealing with Covid, flu, or RSV (please get vaccinated!).
- Those with **memory loss** and all who care for them (including **Royce and Carolyn Stewart**, **Rev. Christine and Paul Vogel**, **Diana Smith's mother**, and others); persons living with Parkinson's or other neurological conditions, (**Cliff Beck**, **Sandy Vermillion**, **Msgr. Jerome Martinez**, **Diane Johnston's sister**, and others); those with chronic illness (**Brooke Roberts**, **Cynde Christie**, **Jan McGough**, **Janyth Fell**, **Mary Noonan**, and others).
- Persons in long-term care or assisted living (**Rhae Burden**, **Helen Wagner**, **Merry and Al Converse**, **Jere Turner**, **Natalie Wells**, 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 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: Dusty Pruitt (302) 393-3265
Food: John Shaffer (505) 466-4372



Outreach

United's Outreach Giving Totals \$83,451 in 2023

United Church members and friends, in Santa Fe and across the country, gave over \$83,000 this past year to “love God by loving our neighbor and God’s creation.”

Over \$13,300 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 refugees, Afghan resettlement, Navajo/Diné relief, regular meals for guests of Santa Fe shelters, gift cards for public schools families in need, legal aid for immigrants, comfort backpacks for kids in crisis, books and social workers for public school kids, carbon offset for climate advocacy, support for composting, Maui fire relief, hurricane 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. 18 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 2023 Compassionate Christmas gifts raised \$11,243 (\$4,000 over 2023) for:

- New Mexico Immigrant Law Center: \$1,443
- Santa Fe Shelters for the Homeless (Casa Familia, St. Elizabeth, Interfaith Shelter, Youth Shelter): each received \$668.50, totaling \$2,674
- Church World Service Blankets: \$1,833
- Solace Crisis Center: \$1,700
- Youth Immersion Trip: \$1,035
- Communities in Schools: \$2,083
- Audubon Center: \$475

LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOR

Outreach Opportunities – Thank you!

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

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. 16 – Chop & Grate (9:30 am)** at United.
- **Mon., Feb. 19** – Deliver food to shelters.
- Make meatloaf at home (8 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.

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 *Tree New Mexico* and *NM Interfaith Power and Light*. Info: unitedchurchofsantafe.org/creation-care.

Adult Faith Formation

ADULT FAITH FORMATION SUNDAY MORNINGS (11:15 after 10:00 worship)

Feb. 4 – TBR

Feb. 11 – All Church Pancake Breakfast
(hosted by Pretty Good Guys)



Congregational Mid-Winter Budget Meeting February 18 – 11:15 am

Join the Congregational Budget Meeting! It's a chance to 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 2024 United Ministries Budget (copies available Sunday, Feb. 11). Thank you in advance for your participation!



Feb. 25 (no forum)

FebFest Concert

of African American Sacred Music

2:00 pm – Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Church

100-voice chorus led by Dr. Anton Armstrong

Sponsored by *Coro Lux* and United Church of Santa Fe
(Bradley Ellingboe, Director of Music for both)

Freewill offering benefits BookKids
and The Grief Center.

LENTEN STUDY SERIES

LET'S STUDY THE LORD'S PRAYER!

**A five-week series on Zoom
starting Tuesday, Feb. 20, 9:00 am MT**

This Lent, Marilyn Gardner and Pr. Ben Larzelere offer a ZOOM Study of *The Greatest Prayer*, by John Dominic Crossan. Widely regarded as the foremost historical Jesus-scholar of our time, Crossan believes the Prayer is “both a revolutionary manifesto and a hymn of hope.” We’ll start Tuesday, Feb. 20 and continue for the five Tuesdays of Lent. Please let us know if you’d like to join in! You can order the book online, buy a copy at the church, or support Santa Fe’s Collected Works. Need help? Call Pr. Larzelere at (505-699-1000).



Groups and Gatherings

Wednesday Women’s Study Group Feb. 7 and 21 – 10:00 am

We discuss M.K. Nelson’s *The Three-Cornered War* and begin Elisabeth Griffith’s *Formidable – American Women and the Fight for Equality: 1920-2020*. All women welcome! (Barbara MacPhee, macphee.b@gmail.com)

Pretty Good Guys Feb. 14 and 28 (10:30 to 12:00)

2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month

This winter and spring, the Pretty Good Guys invites all men to join in a study of “Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time,” a classic book by Marcus Borg. We meet the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, 10:30 to 12:30. Copies of the book available for purchase at the church. All welcome!

Resiliency and Hope: Strengthening Our Souls **Thursday Mornings at 8:00 (MT) on Zoom**

Exercise your mind and your soul each week by exploring the scriptures for the upcoming Sunday. Join in to deepen your faith and share the journey. All welcome! People tune in from all around the country.

Founded in Faith Building in Love **Endowment Year-end Report**

Thanks to the generosity and commitment of many people, United’s “Founded in Faith, Building in Love” Endowment Initiative added \$115,791 to the church’s Endowment fund, bringing the current value of the endowment to \$1,801,072. Others added United to their estate planning or made 3-year pledges. 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!

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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!