

Prayers for the New Year and The Epiphany Season of Light

At the Turn of the Year

Consult not your fears, but your hopes and your dreams.
Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential.
Concern not yourself with what you tried and failed in,
but what it is still possible for you to do.

Pope John XXIII

For Our Own New Life

Renovate our hearts, minds, and spirits, Creative One,
so that we may transform into the people you would have us be. Amen.

Rev. Phiwa Langeni, United Church of Christ

Guidance for the New Year

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me.

God has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The Gospel of Luke 4:18-19

An Old New Year's Resolution

God of all Mercies, guide our feet into the way of peace.

Zechariah, c. 1 C.E.

Jewish Priest and Father of John the Baptizer

A Prayer for Our Time

God of all nations,
give our leaders your justice,
your compassion for the poor,
and your passion for peace.
Give us the same. Amen.

Talitha Arnold - from Psalm 72

A Prayer for Children

Help our children to carry the spirit of Christmas into the new year.
Help us to carry them and all your children in our prayers and love. Amen.

Monthly publication

United Church of Santa Fe
Santa Fe, New Mexico

January 2026

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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,

How do we live faithfully in this time?

That's the fundamental question as we begin a new year. In our jobs and families, as a faith community and as a country, the year of our Lord 2026 begs the question: "How do we live faithfully in challenging times?"

Try this answer: "**Focus on what you can see, not what you can't see.**"

That's how Willy O'Ree lived through his hard times. In 1958, O'Ree was the first Black hockey player to break the color barrier of the National Hockey League. The grandson of enslaved African Americans, O'Ree grew up in Canada, where his grandparents had escaped to with the Underground Railroad.

Like baseball's Jackie Robinson, O'Ree faced ridicule and anger on the ice and off. Even before he put on his NHL jersey, O'Ree faced great challenges. As a boy, he spent more time in skates than any other shoes. Playing professional hockey was his childhood dream.

That dream seemed to come to a crashing end at age 18, when O'Ree ran head on into another player's stick. He woke up in the hospital with broken bones, a detached retina, and a doctor who told him he was permanently blind in one eye. The doctor also said he'd never play again.

But as O'Ree said, "The doctor knew a lot but he didn't know one thing—my passion for hockey." He recovered, learned to compensate for his lost vision, and went on to play in the big league. On the 50th anniversary of his first NHL game, O'Ree shared how he had done it. "I knew I always had a choice," he said, "about my sight and my life." He continued, "After the accident, I chose to focus on what I could see, not what I couldn't."

Focus on what we can see, not what we can't. That's how Willy O'Ree faced hard things beyond his control. It's how he achieved his goals—in hockey and in life. It's also how to live faithfully in our time.

Whether in our individual lives or as a country, this time is different than what many of us envisioned. Due to cuts in programs like SNAP or Medicaid and the dismantling of federal agencies, more and more of our neighbors face hunger and poverty. The hard-earned gains of the civil rights, women's liberation, and LGBTQ+ movements are undermined by current leaders. The elimination of environmental standards threatens all life on the planet. Even the scientific gains of medical research and vaccines are rolled back.

Like Willy O'Ree learning he was blind in one eye, we have a choice. We can focus on what we can't see, what we don't have. Give up hope and live in fear.

Or, like O'Ree, we can focus on what we can see, what we do have, and what we can do. We can see the abundance with which God has blessed us. We can see God still at work in this world. We can trust again in the Light that shines in the shadows, that the shadows have never overcome.

How do we live faithfully in such a time? By focusing on the Light we can see. May that Light shape our lives, our church, and our ministry in this new year ahead.

Blessings,



Worship in January

CALLED TO A NEW WAY **Worship in Epiphany**

For Christians, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem's stable offered new life not only to Jesus and his parents but to Wise Ones, disciples, and the world. Throughout this season of Epiphany, we meet people who found new life when they encountered this Jesus Christ. Through their stories, may we find our way to new life, too.

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

Home by Another Way | January 4- Epiphany Sunday

According to Matthew's Gospel, when the Magi (or Kings or Wise Ones) were searching for the Christ Child, they got way off-track and ended up in King Herod's court, because that's where conventional wisdom told them to find a new king. (Not a good idea to tell the old king there's a new kid on the throne.) Herod wanted them to return to him once they found the child, but the Wise Ones finally wised up and "went home by another way." (Matt. 2:1-11) As we begin a new year, how might we find our way home in a new way?



Remembering our Baptism | January 11

Before he started down a new path of his life, Jesus first went to the life-giving waters of the Jordan River where his cousin John was baptizing people of all backgrounds and beliefs. When he baptized Jesus, Matthew says that the "heaven was opened, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Beloved." (Matt. 3: 13-17) This Sunday, three United members share the stories of their baptisms and what baptism means to them now at this stage of their lives.

God of Our Weary Years | January 18

On the day before Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Day, the gospel of John tells of John the Baptist recognizing his cousin Jesus as "the Lamb of God." When one of John's disciples named Andrew follows Jesus, he then returns to his brother Simon and tells him "We have found the Messiah, the Christ." When Simon goes to meet this Christ, Jesus changes his name to Peter, the Rock. A whole lot is packed in these 13 verses (John 1:29-42). Guest preacher, Rev. Ben Larzelere says that whenever he thinks of Rev. King, this story comes to mind.



Not an Easy Message | January 25

After Jesus' baptism and his 40 days in the desert, he learned that his cousin John (the Baptizer) had been arrested. King Herod did not like John's message of repentance, especially when it was directed at him. So what does Jesus do? He starts preaching "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:12-23) It was the same message that got John thrown in prison - not exactly the kind of new life one would want. Yet people flocked to Jesus' way, just as they had to John's. Why?



FebFest Sunday| February 1

We welcome Dr. Philip Schoultz as guest conductor and preacher with Talitha Arnold and Bradley Ellingboe in a "trialogue" sermon in the 10:00 am service.

Music

Michelle Schumann, Director of Music / Pianist

Happy New Year to all of you! This January, we have much to celebrate and be excited about. Epiphany Sunday (January 4), Choir Director Andre Garcia-Nuthmann leads a “Drop-in Choir” for all voices. If you love to sing, but can’t commit to the Sanctuary Choir, it’s a great opportunity. Come at 9:00 am to rehearse an “accessible” anthem, then sing in the 10:00 am service. No pressure, but lots of fun and meaning, as you help lead worship through song!

On January 21, we celebrate **Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday** with gospel-inspired choral and piano works.

And, mark your calendars for **FebFest 2026**—the 8th year of United’s collaboration with *Coro Lux* (directed by Bradley Ellingboe) for a choral celebration of African American sacred music. Guest conductor and composer, Dr. G. Phillip Schoultz, leads an all-day **choral workshop on Saturday, January 31**. On **Sunday, February 1**, Dr. Schoultz is guest conductor in United’s 10:00 am service and shares a “trialogue sermon” with Talitha and Brad.

Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm, he leads the FebFest Choir in concert at St. Francis Cathedral. (I’m also the pianist for the workshop and concert.)

All singers are welcome! Register for FebFest at abqcorolux.org/febfest/.

You’ll get a “sneak-peek” as United’s choir sings some of the works in the 10:00am Epiphany worship.

Musically yours,

Michelle

Dear Friends at United,

Karen and I wanted to say how thankful we are to you for the ten years we had together. Thank you for welcoming us into the family. Thanks for the laughter and the music that we shared. And thank you for your generous gifts upon my retirement.

Sending our love,
Brad and Karen Ellingboe

Children & Youth

Dana Bender, Director of Family Ministry

Epiphany is January 6, twelve days after Christmas. Epiphany celebrates the Magis’ visit to Mary, Joseph, and their new-born child. The Greek word, ‘epiphany’ means ‘make manifest’ or ‘reveal’ and is celebrated as God’s way of showing that Jesus is the light of the world for all the people.

A friend of mine from high school once abandoned the notion of ‘elf on a shelf’ for her young son. Instead, she placed the three wooden nativity kings (aka Magi) away from the manger. Then, beginning on Christmas, each night she carefully arranged them in new scenarios. Sometimes the Magi / Kings were zip lining across the dining room. Other times they were riding an engine from her son’s train set. All with an intention to get to the Christ Child by Epiphany!

Because January 6 doesn’t always fall on a Sunday, we celebrate it on the closest Sunday to it. This year, that’s **January 4**. All families, children and youth are invited to join in an intergenerational celebration of Epiphany in the 10:00 am service that day.

Confirmation/ Initiates classes also resume on January 4 and January 11. I would love to take this group on a field trip to another faith tradition some Sunday this month.

Be on the lookout for a Family Game Night on Friday, January 23. All are welcome so invite friends!

FebFest 2026

Saturday, January 31 | Choral Workshop
United Church
Sunday, February 1 | Concert
St. Francis Cathedral

United’s Festival Choir and Coro Lux present FebFest 2026 with special guest, Dr. G. Phillip Schoultz, Saturday, January 31 - Sunday, February 1. See Michelle Schumann’s music article for more details. Also, the free Sunday afternoon concert at St. Francis Cathedral includes a freewill offering to support the new Santa Fe Faith Coalition for Immigration and the Albuquerque Road Runner Food Bank.

CARE AND CONCERN

Prayer of Thanks to:

- All the people who helped make **Advent, Christmas Eve, and the Christmas Sunday services** so welcoming, inspirational and beautiful, including the Sacred Space Team, all Musicians, Liturgists and Readers, volunteer Greeters and Ushers (recruited by Diane Darby), Las Posadas (organized by Louise Cavatta); Office Volunteers and Administrator Lin Raymond; Videographer Elijah Marquez and his V-Crew.
- **A special shout-out to those who brought light to United's trees! (Scott, Dave, Bruce, Louise, Linda, Christy, Joe, Larry, Kris, Denny, Sam, Jim, all organized by Bob Ansheles).**
- **Children's and Youth staff and volunteers** for Parents Night Out, *A Francis and Clare Christmas* and all the other ways they brightened all our lives.
- **Outreach volunteers** who've chopped, grated, and delivered food for SF Shelters, and advocated for immigrants, staffed Compassionate Christmas Gift tables and assembled Christmas bags for St. E's, and other projects to help United "love neighbor and love creation."
- **Finance Counters (organized by Joe Jones)** who help keep United on track with Sunday offerings and other financial gifts.

Blessings and New Life:

- For **Camila Fernanda Amador Surgeon**, and her parents **Bina and Eric** (and grandmother **Blanca**), who was dedicated to God and blessed on the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Dec. 21).
- **Sasha Smucker**, who has received early admission to Pomona College for next fall.
- **Zulema Zambrano** and **Larry Thorpe**, who have moved to California.

Prayers of Healing and Hope for:

- **Carolyn Stewart**, following the death of her husband **Royce**. (A Memorial Service to give thanks for Royce's life and commit his soul to God's care and keeping will be Saturday, Jan. 24, 10:00 a.m.)
- **Lin Raymond**, doing out-patient rehab; **Tom Himrod**, recovering from a broken neck; **Jody Spalding**, recovering from a broken ankle, others recovering from hospitalizations and/or surgeries: **David Lindsey (Charlotte)**; **Brad Ellingboe (Karen)**; **Mary Hasbah Roessel (Joe)**; **Judy Crawford (Bob)**, and others.
- Persons dealing with cancer: **Susan Shaffer**, **Connie Maldegen**, **Greg Gaertner**, **Anna Spalding**, **Diane Bethune's brother Jeffery**, and others);
- Those in assisted living: **Sylvia Ortega (Kingston)**; **Ray and Nancy Lutz (Legacy)**; **JoAnn Bolleter's mother (Spanish Trails, Albuquerque)**; and others.
- Persons with ongoing health issues and those who love and care for them (**Leonard Stovall**, **Janice Arlen**, **Mary Deane Lynn**, **Peter Spalding**, **Helen Natonabah McCabe**, **Eli Jimenez**; **Carol Ingells**, **Ann Noss**, and others).
- Those with **memory loss** and all who care for them (**Christine Vogel**, **Roger Knapp** and **Linda Knapp** at Montecito), persons living with Parkinson's or other neurological conditions (**Msgr. Jerome Martinez**, and others); those with chronic illness (**Brooke Roberts**, **Cynde Christie**, **Jan McGough**).
- 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.
- Persons with families in other countries **Blanca Surgeon (Honduras)**, **Maria Navarette (El Salvador)**, **Joohee Rand (Korea)**, **John Walker (Scotland)**, **Avril Ekstrand (Ireland)**, **Kim Zeilik (Spain)**; **Leslie Fagre** and **Eric Popelle (England)**.
- Prayers for the **Jewish community in Australia, and the Jewish communities of Santa Fe**, following the Hanukkah attack (and prayers of thanks for **Ahmed al Ahmed**, the Syrian Muslim who risked his own life to stop the rampage); the people of **Gaza and the West Bank**, as the Israeli government has continued its assault on their communities; government and military leaders of Israel/Palestine/Lebanon, as well as the U.S. and other countries who need God's wisdom, guidance, and commitment to a just peace.
- Continued prayers also for **Nigeria, Sudan, Ukraine, Central America**, and other places impacted by war; people seeking asylum from violence; **policymakers** who determine their fate.
- Military people and law enforcement officers, including those in our congregation.
- Finally, prayers of care and commitment for those facing huge increases in health care costs and/or reduction of support from SNAP, USAID members Medicaid or Medicare, or who are unhoused or are persons of color, LGBTQI+ or female.

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 January

On Call: Dave Wilkison
Food: Cheryl Haskin

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.

Compassionate Christmas Gifts Great Success!

Thanks to the generosity of the United congregation and others in the wider community— As of Dec. 16, we had raised over \$9000 to provide blankets for Ukrainian and other refugees, scholarships for youth immersion trips, support for NM Immigration Law Center, gift cards for families in need, school trips to the Watershed, school lunches for children in Kenya, and other needs. We'll have a complete report in the February newsletter.

United's Shelter Supper Ministries

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

- **Before Friday, Jan. 22**, make meatloaf at home, put in church freezer.
- **Fri., Jan. 23 – Chop & Grate (9:30 am)** at United
- **Fri., Jan. 23 – Deliver food to shelters** that afternoon. (Please contact Pat Roach—proach102@comcast.net for more information.)



BOOKKIDS for Public School Kids

Each year, BOOKKIDS provides 5 new books to Santa Fe public school children. Started by United member Debbie Maloney, BOOKKIDS has several United members on its board and others volunteer for book distributions at Santa Fe schools (in conjunction with Communities in Schools—also started by the United Church). BOOKKIDS helps children start their own at-home libraries, promoting literacy and encouraging good reading skills - indicators of academic success. BOOKKIDS also provides books to other community organizations serving Santa Fe's children and youth. For more information or to volunteer visit <https://www.bookkidssantafe.com/> or contact Gail Ansheles or Joan Snider.

LOVE GOD, LOVE CREATION!

Offset Your Carbon Use

Traveling this Christmas and New Year's season? Help offset your carbon use by tracking your mileage and donating to **United's Carbon Offset Program** (\$4 for every hour in flight; \$4 for every 100 miles driving). Donations go to NM Interfaith Power and Light and Tree New Mexico, both addressing climate change.

Compost Collection for Creation!

Once your holiday feasting is over, bring veggie peelings, meat bones, and other compostable leftovers to United to put in the green compost collection bin (easy access from the church parking lot). Pick up compostable garbage bags at church. (Please do **NOT** deposit standard plastic bags.) It's a great way to care for God's creation. More info at reunityresources.com. Thanks!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEW YEAR

Lend a hand for your favorite local church! Here are some possibilities. (For more information reach out to Lin Raymond or Talitha Arnold) Thank you!

- **Church Historian:** January is a great time to help organize United's "history"—pictures, articles, etc. You don't have to be an official "scrap booker" to help.
- **Sacred Space Team:** If you'd like to help arrange the Sanctuary for Sunday worship or special services and work with a great group of people, let us know!
- **Sunday Greeting and/or ushering:** First impressions make a difference the life of a church. May your smile and warm greeting be part of United's welcome on Sunday mornings! (Contact Diane Darby for more information.)

ADULT FORUMS — Sundays at 11:15 am

Epiphany Get-Acquainted Sunday – Jan. 4

After 10:00 am worship, stick around for an extended coffee and conversation time. We'll have snacks (cheese, crackers, fruit)—and bring your leftover Christmas goodies. We'll have tables and extra coffee, so plan to sit a spell and get to know your United neighbors!

Sunday, Jan. 11 — TBR

Immigration and Refugees:

What's Happening at the Roundhouse?

Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday – Jan. 18

United's Immigration and Refugee Task Force provides an update on legislation proposed for the month-long Legislative session (starting January 19). Learn how you can make your voice heard and make a difference.

What in the World are We Doing?

United's Outreach Ministries – Jan. 26

From providing books for public school children and cleaning up the Santa Fe River to cooking for Santa Fe shelters and advocating for immigrants, the United Church is at work in the world—and all around Santa Fe. This is an opportunity to learn more about some of United's outreach ministries—and find out how you can help!



GROUPS AND GATHERINGS

Wednesday Women's Study Group

January 7 and 21 | 10:00 am

We begin the new year with a focus on Northern New Mexico and the sharing of Willa Cather's classic *Death Comes to the Archbishop*. All women welcome! (Cheryl Morton: 515-240-4523, MomMorton@gmail.com; Jenn Wynn: 817-219-0707, home@wynnes.us)

Pretty Good Guys Explore "What Are Biblical Values?"

Wednesdays, Jan. 14 and 28 | 10:30 am

United men and friends invited to engage a challenging and thoughtful book by John Collins, Professor Emeritus, Yale Divinity School. Collins provides insights into the Bible's understanding of topics as diverse as sexuality and economics. Books available for purchase at church. (505-988-3295)

Resiliency and Hope:

Good News from The Gospel of John

Thursdays on Zoom | 8:00am (MT)

What can a Gospel that's 2000+ years old offer us? 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.



Announcements

Year-End Giving

To claim a charitable deduction for 2025, donations must be received or postmarked by Dec. 31, 2025. Checks received after Dec. 31 cannot qualify for a charitable deduction for 2025, even if predated 2025. (Sorry!) To contribute online, go to unitedchurchofsantafe.org and click "Donate Now." Many thanks!

Consider Electronic Contributions for Your 2026 Pledge

It's simple to set up your pledge as an electronic contribution from your credit card, checking account, or savings account. Call the church (505-988-3295) for authorization form.

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? Call 505-988-3295.

Thank You for "Being the Energy!" We're Almost to the Stewardship Goal!

As of Dec. 16, 147 people had generously pledged for over \$575,000 (almost to the \$625,000 goal). Heartfelt thanks to all who've pledged thus far! If you've not yet pledged for 2026, please consider how God has blessed you, and give from those blessings. Every gift, great or small, makes a difference! Get a pledge card at church or email your pledge to unitedchurchsf@gmail.com. Thank you!

THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE
A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Mailing Date - December 19, 2025

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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!