



Monthly publication

United Church of Santa Fe
Santa Fe, New Mexico

December 2025

**ADVENT PRAYERS
FOR A SEASON OF PREPARATION**

From an Ancient Christmas Chant

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Child of God appear.*

*O come, Desire of Nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid envy strife and quarrels cease,
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel will come to thee, O Israel.*

For Snow — Zuni Pueblo

That our Earth Mother may wrap herself
In a fourfold robe of white meal;
That she may be covered with frost flowers;
That yonder on all the mossy mountains,
The forests may huddle together with the cold;
That their arms may be broken by the snow,
In order that the land may be thus,
I have made my prayer sticks into living beings.

A Prayer for Children

As Mary and Joseph cared for Jesus,
may (*child's name*) know your love and our care.
As we prepare for Christmas,
may *s/he* be blessed with the true meaning of this season:
light in the shadows
and your love in this world.
Amen.

A Prayer for Courage

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.
Come with your visions of peace and of plowshares.
Come with your hope for our world.
Come with your joy in our wilderness.
Stir up your power and come, O Lord.
Come with your love for all people.
Come with your light that overcomes our shadows.
Come with your courage that we might be open to your coming.

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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,

"We don't only interpret scripture," a wise colleague said once.
"Scripture also interprets us."

At no time of the church year is that more true than in these weeks leading up to Christmas. Each year, we're called by the both Prophet Isaiah and John the Baptizer to "prepare the way." Isaiah's visions of lions and lambs, deserts that bloom, and swords beaten in plowshares have been passed down through countless centuries of Advent. And every single Christmas service repeats the same story from Luke's gospel about the mighty Caesar Augustus, a poor couple from Nazareth, and a baby born in a barn far from home.

Yet even if the scriptures for Advent and Christmas seldom change, we ourselves are different each year. Consequently, the hold these sacred texts has on us can be different each December. So, I invite you to consider one well-known Advent text—the opening of the 40th chapter of Isaiah—and let this scripture interpret you, and our world, this year. Isaiah begins:

*Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.*

Who are the people in most need of comfort this Christmas?
Perhaps they're in our own circles of friends, coworkers or colleagues, families.
Perhaps they are people who have lost their jobs or insurance or food aid.
Maybe we don't know their names, but know they live in Sudan or Gaza or
Ukraine
or just across the border of our own country.

*A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

This year, what are the wilderness places you know?
They could be in your own life or that of a friend or family member.
They could also be known throughout this world.

What would take to "prepare the way of the Lord" in wildernesses,
be they the places in our hearts or the wild and desperate places of our world?

*Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.*

What valleys might you be walking through?
What's making your journey rough or uneven?

*Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

Even in a rough or uneven time, how has the glory of the Lord
been revealed to you?

Blessings for the journey!



Worship in December

The One Who Comes — Advent Worship starts November 30

What – or whom—are we waiting for this Christmas? Starting the First Sunday of Advent (right after Thanksgiving ☺), we'll explore that question all through Advent, not only in sermons, but also as we light Advent candles against the shadows and sing "Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (long before singing "O Come, All Ye Faithful)." We'll tell our children stories not of elves on shelves, but of people who beat their swords into plowshares, lions that lie down with lambs, flowers that bloom in the desert, and a poor child born in a stable.

Advent calls us to acknowledge the ache of our world and in our own hearts. But Advent also calls us to open our hearts—and eyes and ears—to see and hear how God is with us in our longing. Holy Waiting is Advent's gift. Share it with friends and neighbors and invite them to worship this season.

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

The One Who Comes . . . as We Least Expect **1st Advent – Nov. 30**



We begin Advent not with Luke's story of Jesus's birth but with the apocalyptic vision of the "Son of Man" twenty-four chapters later. Why? Because a Gospel that ends with Christ in glory, begins with a child born in poverty. So, who is this Jesus Christ—and what is true glory anyway? (In the 10:00 service, we celebrate the baptisms of Ani and Ellie Rode, children of Jenna and Tim, and also bid farewell and Godspeed to Jan and Kitty Jansen, longtime members, returning to the Netherlands to be closer to family.)

The One Who Comes . . . to Transform **2nd Advent – Dec. 7**

People from all over Judea and other regions flocked to the Jordan River where John was baptizing. (Matthew 3:1-12) Why travel miles to stand in line for a brief encounter with a man dressed in camel skins, eating locusts, and preaching a gospel of repentance? What were they seeking? Maybe it was the prophet's vision of the "peaceable kingdom," where lions and lambs lay down together and a little child would lead them (Isaiah 11:1-10) Perhaps they wanted nothing less than a whole new world.

The One Who Comes . . . to the Desert **Joyous Advent (Wear pink :-) – Dec. 14**

In our annual "Lessons and Carols" service, we engage two songs from desert times and places. In the midst of the devastation of his people and the land, the prophet Isaiah breaks into a song about the desert blooming and rejoicing. (Isaiah 35) Living under Roman oppression, young Mary sings of a God who has remembered all who are oppressed and hungry. (Luke 1:46-55) What signs of God's presence do we see in our wilderness time? The scripture translations are from the new *First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of The Bible*, along with readings from Steven Charleston, Joy Harjo, and other Native American theologians and poets.



Vamos Todos a Belén ***A Francis and Clare Christmas*** **4th Sunday of Advent – Dec. 21**

Nativity Scenes, portraying Mary, Joseph, the Christ Child, shepherds, angels, kings, and the rest of the Christmas characters have been a part of Christmas for centuries. But in the Middle Ages, the story of Christ's



birth was confined to the Latin liturgy of the church. Francis and Clare of Assisi, two ordinary people with extraordinary vision, wanted to make Jesus' story come alive for all people. One Christmas Eve, they welcomed ordinary people (and animals) from their town to portray this holy story. *Kids and Youth United* (with help from a few adults), offer us the "First Living Nativity," inviting us all to "Vamos Todos a Belén!" (We also celebrate the baptism of Blanca Surgeon's grandbaby!)

Music Notes

Michelle Schumann: Director of Music

Children & Youth

Dana Bender: Family Ministries Director

Friends,

Truly, when it comes to music making, I can't think of a more exciting time than the Advent and Christmas Seasons. It's also when we have the most commonly shared musical experiences. These shared experiences create a feeling of community and nostalgia, that bind us together in this time.

For Advent, the Sanctuary Choir's offerings sing of hope and anticipation. Our **Lessons and Carols** service for Advent's Joyous Sunday (Dec. 14) features one of my all-time favorites, "The Huron Carol." The following Sunday, they and the Childrens and Youth Choir, sing "Lo, How a Rose/The Rose" composed by my good friend, Craig Hella Johnson.

Both the **5:00 Christmas Eve Candles and Carols service** and the **7:00 Candlelight Service** include instrumentalists and our Choral Scholars as soloists. The Children's/Youth Choir also helps lead the 5:00 service, and in the 7:00 service, the Sanctuary Choir offers a stirring rendition of "Still, Still, Still."

On **Monday, Dec. 22** at United (7:00 pm), I'm playing a fantastic **Christmas Piano Recital** of virtuosically arranged Christmas carols and works by Bach, Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninov and others. It's a free concert with a freewill offering for "Hearts in Harmony,:" Desert Chorale's outreach program with La Luz Shelter

Finally, mark your calendars for **Epiphany Sunday (Jan. 4)** for the "Drop-In Choir" . . . an open invitation to come sing with the adult choir and enjoy the fellowship of music from the front of the sanctuary!\

Looking forward to all of it, with you—

Michelle



Lighting the Way!

Starting in early December, come to United any night to see outdoor lights all around the Church!

Soon and Very Soon

Advent Devotional Booklets

Available at church.

The United Church of Christ's daily Advent Devotionals features writers from across the country (including United's Talitha Arnold). Pick up a free copy in the Community Room and let's take the Advent journey together.

FebFest 2026—

Sat. Jan. 31 and Sun. Feb. 1

Learn with conductor and composer Philip Schoultz in an all-day Saturday workshop Jan. 31, then in Sunday worship, Feb. 1, and a Sunday concert at the Cathedral. All voices welcome. Stay



Advent – Time to Get Ready!

'Advent' comes from the Latin for 'coming' or 'arrival.' It's a special time for families to anticipate and prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. This Advent in *Kids United* and Confirmation, we'll explore "waiting" and "preparing". The Sunday after Thanksgiving (also the First Sunday of Advent) we'll create Advent wreaths for our homes. Each family also receives an Advent booklet of short devotionals and readings to use as you light the Advent candles each week.

Other Special Advent Events

Friday, Dec. 5, 5:30 - 8 p.m. Parent's Night Out 'Christmas Shopping Edition' (or maybe just some time for yourself). Drop the kiddos off at United for an evening of games, crafts, and food. Please contact Dana Bender by Monday, Dec. 1 to reserve a spot. (unitedchurch.dana@gmail.com)

Sunday, Dec. 14 (after 10:00 service) All-Church Advent Family Workshop – Christmas craft, assembling hygiene packs for shelter guests, and holiday sweets. All welcome!

Sunday, December 21

"A Francis and Clare Christmas."

Intergenerational 10:00 Worship

Reader's Theater about the very first Nativity scene.

Wednesday, Dec. 24 - 5:00 p.m.

Candles and Carols Christmas Eve Service

"The Wise Little Burro"

Children and youth help lead as readers and musicians. :) Let Dana know if you'd like to help! (United also offers a 7:00 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with choir and childcare.)

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Farolito Set-Up

Christmas Eve — 3:00 pm

Come help place and light

24 dozen farolitos

To light the way to Bethlehem

(and the United Church!)

Sign up at church to help.



CARE AND CONCERN

PRAYERS FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR WORLD



Prayers for Wisdom, Courage, and Compassion. . .

For ourselves and the leaders of our nation and all nations.

Prayers of Blessing for:

- **The Stewardship/Finance Ministry and Parish Life Ministry Teams, Sunday Speakers, envelope addresses and stuffers, Table Hosts,** and all who organized this fall's Stewardship work, especially All Church "Burrito Brunches." Thanks, too for all who have pledged!
- United Choral Scholar **Rebecca Brunette**, following her wonderful UNM Master Graduate Recital.

Healing and Hope for:

- **Pauline Rindone**, mourning the death of her older sister in Las Cruces; **Anita Skeen**, following the loss of her father John;
- **Lin Raymond**, in in-patient rehab for a recent medical condition; **David Lindsey, his wife Charlotte** and their family, as he recovers from a heart attack and subsequent surgeries.
- Those recovering from surgery and/or accidents (**Mary Hasbah Roessel**-hip replacement; **Darrel Gardner, Nyla Rasmussen; Jennifer Graves, Pauline Rindone's daughter in Alaska, Iana Mason** and others).
- Persons dealing with cancer: **Susan Shaffer, Connie Maldegen, Greg Gaertner, Anna Spalding, Diane Bethune's brother Jeffery**, and others);
- **Sheila Ortega**, Tammie's mother, who has moved to Kingston from the 1800's family homestead in Guadalupita, others in assisted living.
- Persons with ongoing health issues and those who love for them (**Leonard Stovall, Janice Arlen, Mary Deane Lynn, Zulema Zambrano and Larry Thorpe's daughter, Helen Natonabah McCabe, Ray and Nancy Lutz, Eli Jimenez; Carol Ingells, Ann Noss, Max Burdette**, and others).
- Those with **memory loss** and all who care for them (**Royce and Carolyn Stewart, Roger Knapp and Linda Knapp** at Montecito, **Christine and Paul Vogel, JoAnn Bolleter's mother**); persons living with Parkinson's or other neurological conditions (**Msgr. Jerome Martinez**, and others); those with chronic illness (**Brooke Roberts, Cynde Christie, Jan McGough**).
- A family whose loved one is dealing with a recurrence of alcoholism following a job loss; other 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.)
- All those affected by the government shut-down, the roller coaster of SNAP assistance, and the uncertainty about major increases in medical insurance.
- U.S. cities and immigrant families living in the shadow of raids and occupation.
- Our neighbors and God's children impacted by termination and reductions in world-wide food and medical aid.
- Persons who are imprisoned and those who love them.
- A just and lasting peace between the people of Israel, Gaza and the other Palestinian Territories,
- Continued prayers for Ukraine, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, 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.

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Carols and Choruses —Santa Fe Symphony Chorus and Brass at the Cathedral

Tuesday, December 9 — 7:00 pm — FREE

Joan Snider and Talitha Arnold sing with the SF Symphony Chorus.

The Half Life of Madame Curie—Actors Lab

Nov. 20—Dec. 7: Angela Marcus as Madame Curie

Blithe Spirit — Actors Lab

Dec 13 & 14

Jennifer Graves, Director

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 December

On Call: John Shaffer (814) 336-9353
Food: Cheryl Haskin (503) 351-6561

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.

LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOR!

Compassionate Christmas Gifts Market—Starts Sunday, Nov. 30

In the true spirit of Christmas, we invite you to give United's *Compassionate Christmas Gifts* that offer hope, care, and joy to people and places in need. **Sunday Markets: Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14, 21.** Also order online at unitedchurchofsantafe.org. Gifts include:

Church World Service: \$10

Blankets for Refugees around the world (Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza).

Honduran Bilingual Education Community School and Oases Orphanage: \$20

Two months of school supplies for a low-income classroom in Honduras.

New Mexico Immigrant Law Center: \$30

Legal Services and Advocacy for Children, Youth, and Families.

Changing Lenses, Changing Lives: \$50

Provides 21 nutritious lunches for primary school students in Kenya.

United Youth Immersion Trip Scholarship: \$40

Toward a youth scholarship for Youth Immersion Trips or Retreats.

Santa Fe Shelters for the Homeless: \$60

One night at St. Elizabeth, Casa Familia, or Youth Shelters.

Communities in Schools Gift Card for Families in Need: \$50

CIS started as United Church/Salazar School Partnership. It's grown and so have the needs of SF students.

My Water, My Watershed Santa Fe Student Field trip: \$25

Sponsor a public-school student for an experiential, science-based program to study and explore their watershed, learning about complex relationships between living things and their environment.



United Church of Christ Christmas Fund

Because many United Church of Christ retirees faithfully served low-income inner-city or rural congregations and/or communities of color, their pensions are very low. The UCC Christmas Fund provides emergency grants, supplemental annuities, health insurance, and Christmas "Thank You" checks for clergy and lay worker retirees in need. With inflation, that need is greater than ever. To donate, go to unitedchurchofsantafe.org (Donate Now) or send a check to United Church of Santa Fe (memo "Christmas Fund").

Monetary Donations for Good Shepherd

Episcopal Church in Navajoland

United sends regular financial support to help with covid supplies, their traditional Navajo organic Children's Vegetable Garden, and other needs. (memo: Diné).



Toiletries for Shelter Christmas Bags

Through December 7, we collect **individual size new toiletries** (e.g., shampoo, lotion, soap, toothpaste, etc.) for Christmas Bags United children assemble for St. Elizabeth Shelter guests. (Please no mouthwash, meds, razors, etc.). Thank you!

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!

LOVE GOD, LOVE CREATION!

Travelling This Holiday? Track Your Miles and Mitigate Climate Change through United's "Carbon Offset Program"

When you drive or fly, count your miles and then donate \$4/hour in flight or \$4/1,000 miles driving to United's "**Carbon Offset Ministry**" that supports climate advocacy of *NM Interfaith Power and Light* and hands-on work of *Tree New Mexico*. More info at: unitedchurchofsantafe.org/creation-care.

Compost Collection for Creation!

Bring your compostable products to deposit anytime in the green bin (easy access from the church parking lot). Compostable garbage bags available at church. (Please **DON'T USE** standard plastic bags.) More info at: reunityresources.com. Thanks!

Adult Faith Formation & Stewardship

Thank You for YOUR Pledges to
BE THE ENERGY!
Campaign for United 2025

Thank you to the 130 people who made the “Breakfast Burrito Brunch” such a success! (And thanks to the 100+ United members and friends who’ve pledged over \$4000,000 to the “**BE the Energy!** Campaign for United 2026!” With everyone’s help, we’ll make the **\$625,000 Challenge Goal** (and even reach the **\$635,000 Victory Goal**)! Bring your pledge card to worship, mail it USPS, or send it via email. Also please consider electronic debit/credit program. Email unitedchurchsf@gmail.com or call (505) 988-3295 for info and forms. Thank you and thanks be to God!

When the Holidays Are Different – Nov. 30

For all their joy, holidays can be challenging for those who have lost a loved one, moved to a new place, gone through a separation or divorce, or whose kids aren’t coming home this year. Take time with Talitha Arnold and the Congregational Care Team to reflect, get resources to help, and most of all, remember the reason for Christmas: Emmanuel, “God-with-us.”

Contigo Immigrant Justice (formerly “Santa Fe Dreamers”) –Dec. 7

Jesus and his family were refugees. When he was still a baby, they fled King Herod’s violence by going to Egypt. “Santa Fe Dreamers,” children brought to the U.S. by their parents fleeing violence and starvation, have stories like Jesus. We welcome Miles Tukonow of Santa Fe’s Contigo Immigrant Justice to share their stories.

All Church Family Advent Workshop – Dec. 14

Activities include assembling hygiene packs, making a Christmas craft, and enjoying holiday sweets. All welcome! Through Dec. 14, please bring donations of travel-size shampoo, toothpaste, body wipes, toothbrushes, Shelter guests.

Making a Difference: Tax smart philanthropy while you’re working or in retirement—also Dec. 14

Don Duncan, CFA/MBA focuses on helping manage your philanthropy, especially to the church, in the most tax efficient manner possible. The forum covers different gifting strategies and gifting vehicles that help United and help you reduce your taxes.

Dec. 21 – Blessing of the Trees and Extended Fellowship Time

Bring your Christmas cookies. We’ll also “Bless the Trees” an ancient custom to thank the trees for their blessings of the year and pray for their safe journey through the winter.

Las Posadas at United — Tuesday, Dec. 23—6:00 pm

Share in this wonderful New Mexico tradition as we welcome our “sister congregation,” Santa Maria de la Paz, for an early evening of song, prayer, and a visit from a couple of newlyweds—and good food! That night, United becomes the stable of Bethlehem to welcome both Santa Maria and United friends (and provide hospitality and refreshments). Please sign up to let us know you can help. And plan to come—all ages welcome!

Memorial Gifts for Christmas Wreaths, Poinsettias, and Flowers for Congregational Care

At Christmas, United is adorned with wreaths and poinsettias, that are then delivered to United members and friends for whom the holidays may be hard. Your contributions in honor or memory of loved ones help underwrite it all. (Suggested minimum donation: \$20/name.) Please fill out this form, return to the church or email to unitedchurchsf@gmail.com with names of persons to be remembered or honored. We need names by **Sunday, Dec. 14.**

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CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS AND REMEMBRANCES

Please bring or mail your contribution to the church office

(1804 Arroyo Chamiso, Santa Fe, NM 87505) by **Sunday, December 14**, to be listed in bulletins.

DONOR: _____ Phone: _____

Name of person to be remembered/honored (please circle one): In memory of In honor of

(Please print) _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ (Please make checks to “UCSF” with note for “Flowers”)

THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE
A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
1804 Arroyo Chamiso - Santa Fe NM 87505

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E-mail: unitedchurchsf@gmail.com

www.unitedchurchofsantafe.org

Mailing Date — November 21, 2025

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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 Kids United** and also **livestreamed online** (access it on United’s website: [unitedchurchofsantafe.org](http://www.unitedchurchofsantafe.org)). We also offer an **8:30 am Contemplative Communion Service**. 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!