

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

February 2026

A MONTH OF PRAYERS FOR . . .

Peace

Turn the hearts and minds of our leaders and ourselves away from war
and back to you, O Prince of Peace. Amen.

Groundhog Day | February 2

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, you are very great.

You make the clouds your chariot and set the earth on its foundations.

You create high mountains as a home for wild goats.

The rocks are a refuge for conies (akin to 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)

Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) Sunday | February 15

On this mountain God will make a feast for all peoples,
a feast of rich food.

Thank you, Lord,

for the ways you feed our deep hungers with your deep love.

(Prophet Isaiah, 25:6-10)

Presidents' Day | February 16

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 First Sunday of Lent and the Congregational Budget Meeting

February 22

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.

For Children (and the rest of us)

For Valentine's Day and the Start of Lent

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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Senior Pastor

Sam Elkind
Moderator of the Congregation

Dana Bender
Director, Family Ministry

Michelle Schumann
Director of Music/Pianist

Andre Garcia-Nuthmann
Choir Director

Elijah Marquez
*Videographer/
Media Coordinator*

Lin Raymond
Office Administrator

Maria Navarette
Children's Assistant

Destiny Muñoz
Children's Ministry Assistant

**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,

Well, the baby Jesus finally got put away.

Due to a variety of factors, the Christmas decorations, including the Nativity set, stayed up longer than usual at my house this year. Of course, I hadn't put things out until a couple days before Christmas, so I figured I had a bit of wiggle room on the January side of the holidays. Still, I hadn't planned on extending the 12 Days of Christmas to two weeks. Nor had I intended to wait until mid-January before boxing up the shepherds, kings, and stable.

Some years are like that. Sometimes the journey of faith is like that, too. It just takes longer to put the baby Jesus away and get back to the adult things of life—like mid-winter Congregational Budget Meetings and planning for Lent. (Ash Wednesday is February 18.)

But as strange as it may sound, the good news is that the baby Jesus has to get put away every year. Of course, the stores and malls do that by December 26. The world needs to move on to other important holidays, like Super Bowl Sunday, Groundhog Day, and National Weatherman's Day (Feb. 5).

But as Christians, we put away the baby Jesus for a different reason. We do it because our faith calls us to encounter the adult Jesus, the one who called people to new life. The Jesus who healed souls and spirits, as well as bodies. The one who told stories that challenged people to think about God, themselves, and this world in new ways. The one who cried out for justice and gave his life for others.

Long after the culture has stopped oohing and aahing over the cute baby in the cowshed, we're called into a relationship with the Jesus who grew up and walked the journey of life that you, I, and every adult walks. The adult Jesus who knew adult joys and adult sorrows. The one who had grown-up dreams for his life and knew grown-up defeat. The one who faced grown-up death.

That's the good news, five weeks after Christmas, when the baby Jesus has finally been put away. The good news that the baby Jesus grew up, put away his toys, and took on the adult life that you and I lead.

And because of that, we can be assured in our grown-up lives, that the living, life-giving presence of God is still with us, with our church, and with this world—every step of the way.

Blessings,



(Also, as the tragic and disturbing decisions of the nation's current leadership continue, a reminder that the United Church Sanctuary is open for private prayer, Monday through Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm.)

Worship in February

RE-IMAGINING GOD **Moving from Epiphany into Lent**

The Season of Light (aka “Epiphany”) leads us into the wilderness season of Lent. We begin February worship with FebFest, welcoming nationally known African American composer and conductor Dr. G. Phillip Shoultz (Feb. 1) followed by the celebration of Mardi Gras (Feb. 15) with guest pianist Andy Kingston, and then plunge into the shadows of Ash Wednesday (Feb. 18) as we begin Lent’s journey. Yet even in the shadows, our faith promises that the journey leads to new life—and new understandings of who the Holy One is—and who we are.

Join in—and invite a friend!



What God Wants | February 1—FebFest Sunday

What does God really want from us? How do we discern God’s will—individually, as a church, and especially for our ministry with children, youth, and families? The Prophet Micah (6:8-9) is a good place to start: “What does God require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.” And so are Jesus’ Beatitudes. (Matthew 5:1-12) Let both prophets be our guides as guest conductor G. Phillip Shoultz joins Talitha Arnold and Bradley Ellingboe in a “trialogue” sermon.

God’s Wisdom | February 8

“God chose what is dumb,” the apostle Paul wrote to the United Church of Corinth, “to expose the so-called ‘brightest and best.’” (Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*). “God deliberately chose men and women the world overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these ‘nobodies’ to expose the hollow pretensions of the ‘somebodies.’” (I Corinthians 1:23-29) For Paul, God’s good news turned the world on its head. The Hebrew Prophet Isaiah said the same, telling his people that God didn’t want their great spectacles but instead wanted them to feed the hungry, shelter the poor, and create a just world for all. (Isaiah 58:1-12)



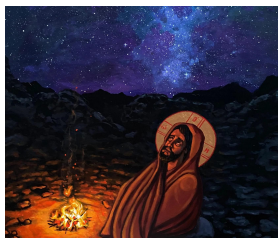
God’s Glory! | Mardi Gras Sunday – February 15

After Peter, James, and John make it to the top of a high mountain with Jesus, the three disciples see him in all his glory. (Matthew 17:1-9) “Sunlight poured from his face.” Not surprisingly, they want to stay in that mountaintop glory, but God tells them to listen to Jesus, which means they need to follow where he leads—which is down from the mountain to offer God’s light, life, and hope to others. Guided by guest jazz pianist Andy Kingston, we’ll take that journey, too. Bring a friend to our annual, toe-tapping Mardi Gras service!

Lent’s Journey to New Life | Ash Wednesday – February 18 | 12:00 Noon and 7:00 pm



“Create in me a clean heart,” prays the composer of Psalm 51, “and renew a right spirit within me.” A new heart and a steadfast spirit—a good starting point for Lent’s journey. And the Prophet Joel reminds us that it’s never too late to turn back to God’s ways. (Joel 1-2, 12-17) When we turn our fears and sins back to dust and come for the marking of ashes, may we join with the Psalmist—and commit our hearts and spirits to a new and right relationship with God, God’s children, and God’s creation.



The Real Temptations | 1st Lent – February 22

Deep in the wilderness, the Devil of Doubt entices a hungry Jesus to turn stones into bread, a lonely Jesus to test God’s love, and a perhaps fearful Jesus to lord his power over all nations. To face down the Great Distractor, Jesus must remember what he really hungers and longs for. (Matt.4:1-11) What are our deep hungers? What—or Who—do we long for? Lent begins with such questions.

Music

Michelle Schumann, Director of Music / Pianist

As always, there's a lot going on with music at United! February is a busy month that begins with **FebFest 2026**, our celebration of African American sacred music. A collaboration between United Church of Santa Fe and Brad Ellingboe's wonderful "Coro Lux" singers, this year's FebFest is led by guest conductor and composer, Dr. G. Phillip Shoultz III (and I am the collaborative pianist).

It starts with an all-day choral workshop on Saturday, Jan. 31 at United—and all singers welcome! On Sunday, Dr. Shoultz is our guest in 10:00 worship at United, conducting one or two of his works as part of the service, and doing a trialogue sermon with Talitha and Brad. Sunday afternoon, FebFest culminates in a 3:00 free concert of choral music and readings at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis. All welcome!

On February 15, we welcome jazz pianist, **Andy Kingston**, to help lead our annual **Mardi Gras** service. There will be great music, great fellowship, and as always, a great message. Three days later, **Ash Wednesday** begins our contemplative and thoughtful journey to Easter. Worship includes special piano music for the 12:00 noon service and the Choir in the 7:00 pm service. We continue the journey Feb. 22, the First Sunday of Lent. I am working with André to plan the choir's music to spiritually carry us all through this season.

Musically yours,
Michelle



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.

Children & Youth

Dana Bender, Director of Family Ministry

Here at United Church, we take the colors of the church calendar seriously! Particularly in the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Lent. How often have we heard Talitha say, '...and next week wear purple!?' Remember 'tongues of fire' red cupcakes made by the children of the church last Pentecost Sunday? These colors express emotions and ideas that are associated with each of the seasons of the liturgical year.

Congregations in the United Church of Christ have the freedom to use any combination of colors (or no particular colors) as seems best to them. The use of traditional colors, however, connects us to the wider Body of Christ and provides worship planners (and the rest of us) with visual aids that mark the transition from one season to another. These colors are beautifully displayed in the quilt banners hung in the sanctuary, as well as in altar and pulpit decorations.

Kids United

This month, *Kids United* (K-grade 5) explore the church calendar, the colors associated with each season, and the meaning behind those colors. I'll bet they'll be able to teach us a thing or two about this by the time Lent begins.

Confirmation/Initiates

Confirmation/Initiates (grades 6-12) are halfway through their classes this year. They have discussed with mentors the history of the Christian church and the creeds and covenants therein. Through February and March, they begin discussions about God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus and start writing their own "Statements of Faith."

BE the ENERGY! (and you have been!) Campaign for United 2026

Thanks to your generosity and commitment, we've exceeded even the Challenge Goal! As of mid-January, 182 households and individuals pledged \$657,736 for United's 2026 Ministry Budget. Every dollar pledged means less needed from our reserves to balance this year's budget. Thank you!! You've been the energy needed to expand our children's and youth ministries, keep up with inflation, fund our music ministries, and care for the wider community and world. If you haven't done so already, please make a pledge today—to ensure United's future tomorrow. To pledge or for more info, please contact Moderator Sam Elkind or Office Administrator Lin Raymond. Thank you!

CARE AND CONCERN

Prayer of Thanks to:

- **Congregational Care Team (led by John Shaffer)** for delivering Christmas flowers to over 25 United members and friends who are shut-in or going through other difficulties.
- **Treasurer (and volunteer accountant) Sarah Sawtell, Moderator Sam Elkind, Council member Bob Ansheles**, and all who are helping wrap up the 2026 Stewardship campaign and develop the 2026 operating budget.
- **Worship leaders Rev. Ben Larzelere, Dana Bender, Chris Palkowski, Rev. Jim Hogue, Karen Wilbanks, Dave Feldt**, and others when Talitha was away in January.

Congratulations and Blessings for:

- **Camila Fernanda Amador Surgeon**, her parents Bina and Erik, grandmother Blanca and her whole family following her Dedication Celebration the Sunday before Christmas.
- **Allie Norris**, starting a new job with the Santa Fe Symphony!

Prayers of Healing and Hope for:

- **Daniel Kalogerini and Erin Larsen (and 6-year-old Isaac)**, following the death of Daniel's mother in Chile; **Bob and Helen Meinershagen**, after Bob's sister death this past fall; **Jerry Elliot**, continuing under Hospice care.
- **Barbara MacPhee**, recovering from broken ribs after a fall; **Chris Wismer**, following hip replacement surgery; **Tom Himrod**, continuing to recover from a broken neck; **Pam Hyde**, dealing with severe back issues; **Jody Spalding**, recovering from a broken ankle, others recovering from hospitalizations and/or surgeries.
- Persons dealing with cancer: **Susan Shaffer, Connie Cody-Maldegem, Greg Gaertner, Anna Spalding, Diane Bethune's brother Jeffery**, and others.
- Those in assisted living: **Sylvia Ortega and Jim Mills** (both at 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 (including **Rev. Christine and Paul Vogel, Rev. Roger Knapp, Linda Knapp**, and others); persons living with Parkinson's or other neurological conditions, (**Msgr. Jerome Martinez**, and others); those with chronic illness (**Brooke Roberts, Cynde Christie, Jan McGough, Janyth Fell**, 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 with families in other countries **Blanca Surgeon** (Honduras), **Maria Navarette** and **Destiny Muñoz** (El Salvador), **Joohee Rand** (Korea), **John Walker** (Scotland), **Avril Ekstrand** (Ireland), **Kim Zeilik** (Spain); **Leslie Fagre** and **Eric Poppele** (England).
- Prayers for people of **Venezuela** in the wake of the attack and takeover of the country by the U.S.; **Gaza and the West Bank**, facing starvation; 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.
- Prayers for the people and leaders of **Minneapolis, Chicago, Portland, Los Angeles, New York City, and other U.S. cities** dealing with ICE raids and being occupied by the U.S. military.
- 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 February
On Call: John Shaffer: (814) 336-9353
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 Exceeds \$90,000 in 2025

United Church members and friends, in Santa Fe and across the country, gave over \$90,000 this past year to "love God by loving our neighbor and God's creation."

Over \$20,000 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 rest went to local and international partners to provide support, legal aid, and advocacy for immigrants and refugees, Santa Fe shelter meals, books for public school kids, carbon offset for climate advocacy, support for composting, climate catastrophe (flood, fire) relief financial aid for medical or other emergencies.

United's outreach efforts are also supported by extensive staff and volunteer involvement. A detailed report of outreach giving will be in the Feb. 22 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 2025 Compassionate Christmas gifts raised over \$10,000 for:

- New Mexico Immigrant Law Center: \$2,050
- Santa Fe Shelters for the Homeless: \$2,220
(Casa Familia, St. Elizabeth, Youth Shelter)
- Church World Service Blankets: \$820
- Solace Center's Child Comfort Backpacks: \$1,025
- Youth Immersion Trip: \$680
- Communities in Schools: \$1,700
- SF Watershed Association Student Field Trips: \$750
- Changing Lenses, Changing Lives Student Lunches: \$1,200

LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOR

United's Shelter Supper Ministries

Help provide supper for guests of St. Elizabeth and Casa Familia Shelters by volunteering or with financial support (memo: shelter meals). Thank you!

• **Fri., Feb. 20 – Chop & Grate (9:30 am) at United and/or help deliver.**

• **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, Arizona, 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 FORUMS — Sundays at 11:15 am

Feb. 1 – Meet the Conductor

Stay after the 10:00 service to meet our FebFest guest conductor and composer Dr. G. Phillip Shoultz, III, and continue the conversation about African American sacred music and learn about Dr. Shoultz' journey of faith. Come to the free FebFest Concert at 3:00 pm at St. Francis Cathedral Basilica that benefits Santa Fe Faith Coalition for Immigrants and Albuquerque Roadrunner Food Bank.

Feb. 8 — TBR

Feb. 15 – Two Opportunities *All Church Pancake Breakfast*

United's "Pretty Good Guys" rustle up some very good pancakes and invite you to join them for an All Church Breakfast after the 10:00 service

United's Finances: Where They Come from and Where Do They Go?

For those who're interested (while you're eating pancakes), United's Stewardship & Finance Team members share United's financial info—sources of income (primarily from pledges and donations) and how we manage and use it to fund our ministries, from children and youth to worship and music to outreach and maintaining the building and grounds. All welcome with your questions and thoughts.

Feb. 22 – Midwinter Congregational Budget Meeting

Join the Congregational Budget Meeting! We'll discuss (and hopefully, approve :-)) the proposed 2026 United Ministries Budget (copies available Sunday, Feb. 15). Thank you in advance for your participation!

GROUPS AND GATHERINGS

Wednesday Women's Study Group

February 4 & 18 | 10:00 am

We discuss Hannah Nordhaus' *American Ghost*. All women welcome! (Cheryl Morton, mommorton@gmail.com; Jenn Wynne, home@wynnes.us).

Pretty Good Guys Explore "What Are Biblical Values?"

February 11 & 25 | 10:30 am - noon

This winter and spring, the Pretty Good Guys invites all men to join in a study of "What Are Biblical Values?" by Yale professor John Collins. Books available for purchase at church. We meet the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, 10:30 to 12:00.

Resiliency and Hope: The Gospel of John

Thursdays on Zoom | 8:00 am (MST)

Exercise your mind and your soul each week by exploring the challenges and wisdom of the Gospel of John. All welcome to share in this journey. People tune in from all around the country. Sign up at unitedchurchsf@gmail.com.

Lenten Book Study(ies) in the Works

Starting week of February 23

United will offer one or more book studies during Lent, starting the week of February 23. Watch Sunday bulletins and midweek emails for more information.



Announcements

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 \$325,197 to the church's Endowment fund, bringing the current value of the endowment to \$2,275,007. We also received bequests from the estates of Dilys Evans and Sheila Paterson and also Don and Linda Zillman. Several United friends 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 Sam Elkind, Treasurer Sarah Sawtell, and the Endowment Trustees Caroline Burnett, Ed Barker, David Cagle, and Rev. Talitha Arnold (ex officio) are glad to talk with you. Thank you!

THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE
A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Mailing Date - January 15, 2026

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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!