



# NUUSLETTER

of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula

Theme: Choosing Hope

Sunday Services at 9:30 a.m. in person and via Zoom and 11:15 a.m. in person

**December 7**

**“Hope for the Beautiful and the Broken”**

**Rev. Elaine Gehrmann, Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, and  
Worship Associate Christina Zaro**

The world is so beautiful - and in the beauty we see the fullness of what is broken. Our living tradition invites us to answer the call of beauty, which is justice. Join us this Sunday as we dive into that invitation - that tug toward wholeness, even (especially) when everything feels broken - and the tools that love and beauty offer us as we hold this work in community. Special guest, the Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, president of the UU Service Committee (UUSC), will share stories of the remarkable justice work UUSC partners are engaging in around the world with the support of our UUSC members.

**December 14 -- 10:30 a.m.**

**“The Snow Tree – A Service for All Ages”**

**DRE Shannon Morrison and Rev. Axel Gehrmann**

**There will be only one service at 10:30 a.m. today.** Today’s multi-generational service will feature a special holiday pageant: the story of a snow tree and a little bear. Please join this celebration for all ages, as we all will help rekindle the season’s spirit of peace, hope and joy!

**December 21**

**“A Patch of Light - Music Sunday”**

**Rev. Elaine Gehrmann, Jorge Torrez, Lucy Faridany,  
and the UUCMP Community Choir**

This year our annual winter holiday Music Sunday will remind us of the comforts of winter darkness, as well as the joy and promise of light. Jorge Torrez, Lucy Faridany and our UUCMP Community Choir will share an inspiring assortment of music, giving us hope in the midst of winter.

## Religious Exploration

Children (pre K - 11) and teens (12-18) attend our worship service on Sundays at 11:15 a.m. and go to their respective Religious Exploration classes following the Story for All Ages.

**December 24 - 5:00 p.m.**

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

**Revs. Elaine and Axel Gehrmann and Worship Associates**

Join us for stories of the season, carols and candlelight. All ages are welcome! And please bring a plate of cookies to share.



**December 28**

**“Seeing is Believing in 2026”**

**Worship Associates Bjorn Nilson and Ray Krise**

As the new year approaches, it’s time for resolutions. This month’s theme is "choosing hope." Can we express hopeful resolutions for 2026 and work to realize them? Seeing will be believing and vice versa. Shakespeare’s Hamlet needed to see a paternal apparition to confront his future. And as Hamlet reminds his friend (and us): “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

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## Ministers' Message Rev. Axel Gehrman

I can't believe it's December! For me, this is always an auspicious time of year, packed as it is with holiday activities and observances, some of them ancient and almost timeless, others newly invented and unprecedented – and everything in between.

The commerce and the commotion of the holidays, the excesses in advertising and entertainment, are not my favorite part. They often strike me as superficial, corny or crass, and yet they are part of the season.

I think of these trappings as bright flashing warning signs, like the ones set up on the highway when road crews are at work, alerting us to pay attention to what lies ahead: something important happening just around the next bend, something we might otherwise miss. Without the flashing lights, we might speed by obliviously.

The signs and signals convey a sense of urgency and immediacy, encouraging us to be watchful. Look around! Open your eyes and ears, and you will sense something more subtle and sublime: Notice the waxing and waning of daylight hours. Notice the sun's daily trajectory, as we barrel toward the winter solstice and the longest, deepest night of the year. Notice the angle of sunlight and shadow. Notice the dusk. Notice the dawn. Because whether we pay attention or not, they affect us all.

The motion and momentum of earth circling sun affects everything that lives and moves on this planet. It is the ultimate order of things, more ancient than life itself. And it touches us more deeply than we know.

The multitude of holiday observances – the symbols and stories and countless traditions – each seek to bring the universal to a personal level, to help us make sense of it all, and ideally instill a spirit of peace and goodwill within us.

That's what I find, when I light candles, exchange holiday gifts and greetings, and sing familiar seasonal songs. I am moved and deeply affected by these simple rituals. They remind me to pay attention amidst the rush and roar of our days, and rediscover profound truths: Our world is full of beauty. Every season of life has its blessings. Our hearts should be filled with gratitude and wonder.

Whatever your favorite holiday observances may be in the days and weeks ahead, I hope they help you do just that: observe. May they open your eyes and ears. May they open your minds and hearts. May you be inspired by the solstice season, and may you truly find the spirit of hope, love and joy reborn again.

See you in church,

*Axel*

After 30 years in faith-based leadership, **the Rev. Mary Katherine Morn**, our December 7th guest preacher, joined the UU Service Committee (UUSC) as President and Lead Executive Officer in 2018. She has helped to grow a number of Unitarian Universalist congregations serving their members and the larger community, including congregations in Georgia, Tennessee, Washington, D.C., and Virginia.

Mary Katherine contributed to efforts for economic, racial, and social justice in Macon, Georgia at the Economic Opportunity Council/Headstart with the NAACP. She also worked deeply in the reproductive justice movement. In Nashville, Tennessee, she collaborated with the Interfaith Alliance and Industrial Areas Foundation. In Fairfax, Virginia, she worked with interfaith ministries addressing hunger and homelessness, collaborated with LGBTQI+ advocacy organizations, and served on the county's homelessness task force.

Mary Katherine also served in volunteer leadership with the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association and for four years as Director of Stewardship and Development for the Unitarian Universalist Association.



## Men's Breakfast

**Saturday, December 13, at 8:30 a.m.**

The men's monthly breakfast is continuing as hybrid. Our next meeting is Saturday, December 13, from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., in the Fireplace Room. People will bring food of their choice to the in-person meeting. If you prefer, you can join us via Zoom from home at 9:00 a.m.

Zoom Meeting ID is: 975 5961 1965. Passcode: 408070

On a phone (call 669-900- 9128)  
Or with a computer - simply click on this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/97559611965>



The breakfast is open to all who identify as male or gender fluid. Our conversation is confidential. If you are joining us in person, please RSVP to Mike Lovell [lovellmike50@hotmail.com](mailto:lovellmike50@hotmail.com) so that we will have an idea of how much food to bring. If you have any dietary restrictions, please bring your own food.



## PUBLICATION DEADLINES

ANNOUNCEMENTS for SUNDAYS from the pulpit are due by 9 a.m. on Wednesdays.

ARTICLES for THE WEDNESDAY WEEKLY NEWS-LETTER email are due by noon, on Tuesdays.

MONTHLY NUUSLETTER articles are due by the 16th of each month.

## SCHEDULED EVENTS

**Adult Community Choir** meets every Thursday, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

**Board of Trustees** meets on Wednesday, December 17, 5:30 p.m.

**Buddhist Sangha** is every Wednesday at 7 p.m. in person in the Sanctuary. Zoom is available. See page 11.

**Celtic Christmas Concert** is Saturday, December 13, 2 p.m. in the Sanctuary. See page 10.

**Committee on Family Ministry** does not meet in December.

**Communications Committee** meets on Sunday, December 28, at 12:30 p.m., in the Conference Room.

**Friday Game Night** is Friday, December 12, 6:30 p.m., in the Fireplace Room.

**I-HELP for Men** is Sunday, December 14, 5 p.m. Sign up on the Meal Train (page 12) or contact Greg Simmons if you can help.

**I-HELP for Women** is Sunday, December 28. For more information contact Mibs McCarthy.

**Membership Committee** meets Wednesday, December 3, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

**Men's Breakfast Group** meets Saturday, December 13, 8:30 a.m. in person and 9 a.m. via Zoom. See article at left.

**Music Committee** meets on Tuesday, December 23, at 6 p.m. via Zoom.

**NUUSletter deadline** for the January issue is Tuesday, December 16.

**Program Council** meets on Tuesday, December 9, at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom. Contact Mibs McCarthy [programcouncil@uucmp.org](mailto:programcouncil@uucmp.org)

**Social Justice** meets Sunday, December 7, 12:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary and via Zoom.

**Stewardship** meets Wednesday, December 3, 1 p.m. via Zoom.

**T'ai Chi Chih** meets Tuesdays at 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary. See page 11.

**Youth Music** will be on the 1st and 3rd Sundays between the services in the Conference Room. If you are interested, please send Jorge an email: [music@uucmp.org](mailto:music@uucmp.org)

**Winter Solstice Bonfire** is Saturday, December 20, 3:30 p.m. at Moss Beach. See page 5.

## RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



**DECEMBER!**



**CHILDREN'S  
RELIGIOUS  
EXPLORATION**

Dear UUCMP Families,

This month we'll catch the coattails of fall and begin our transition into the winter season. We're fortunate to enjoy milder weather than many other regions of our state, country, and world, but there's still something special about the shift to cooler air and holiday lights shining bright. I hope that in the midst of the season, you'll give yourself permission to slow down—make space for cozy rest, connect with the people, places, causes, and activities that bring you joy, or simply take a much-needed nap when the moment calls for it.

We are looking forward to our annual Winter

Pageant on Sunday, December 14th, which will be a single service at 10:30 a.m. so our whole community can gather together. This year we'll once again bring to life the magical story of *Bear and the Winter Tree*. I hope to see you there!

With holiday breaks and travel approaching, our Sunday gatherings with children and youth will take on more of a one-room-schoolhouse feel. We'll offer opportunities for creating handmade gifts for loved ones and simple, meaningful activities to keep us connected during this busy time. Please keep an eye on the Weekly Newsletter for updates and details about what's happening each week.



Don't forget our Winter Solstice bonfire on Moss Beach on December 20. See page 5.

Please also note that our Committee on Family Ministry (CoFM) will meet next in January. With warmth and gratitude,

Shannon  
Shannon Morrison (she/her)  
Director of Religious Exploration

### Mistletoe - Mythic and Important Native Plant

Mibs McCarthy

Mystic, mythic mistletoe: Yes, the Christmas decoration you stand under in anticipation of a kiss has a more of a history than you might imagine. And you can find this magical plant in our local oak trees. *Phoradendron leucarpum tomentosum*: Santalaceae family. "Phora means 'thief' in Greek; dendron means 'tree;' leu means 'white,' and carpum means 'berry;' thus 'white -berried thief of the tree.' In Anglo-Saxon, mistel means 'dung' and tan means 'twig;' thus 'dung on a twig,' referring to the fact that mistletoe often sprouts on branches where birds have left their droppings. Oak mistletoe is also known as Pacific mistletoe and, in Navajo, 'basket on high.'" (From Kate Marianchild's book, *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands: Plants & Animals Among California's Oaks*.)

For years, oak mistletoe has been maligned and considered a parasitic killer of trees. But now it is known to be an ecologically important native plant. a keystone species in the oak woodlands. t is disproportionately important to other species relative to its abundance. If mistletoe is removed from

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ecosystems, one-third of the birds, mammals, and insects disappear, according to Marianchild. It is easy to spot oak mistletoe in winter as rounded green clumps in the upper third of a tree.

Mistletoe gets minerals and water from deep inside a tree and, thus, it is considered a hemiparasite, rather than a full parasite. It produces abundant, high-quality nectar, fruit, and leaves over long periods of time. Although birds and mammals find mistletoe's fruits and leaves edible, both are poisonous to humans. It spreads very slowly, and it takes so little water and minerals from a tree that the effect on a tree's life is usually negligible.

The sugar and protein-rich berries from mistletoe provide food for at least twenty-eight species of birds as well and many mammals. The western bluebird's winter survival and family structure depend on the availability of oak mistletoe berries, says Marianchild.

Small mammals curl up in tight balls in the center of mistletoe masses in winter, insulated by the leaves. They love to eat the leaves which are sixty percent starch and sugar and nearly ten percent protein. But all parts of the plant are poisonous to humans. Enjoy at a distance or hang it above your door to encourage a kiss.



Let's Celebrate  
**WINTER SOLSTICE**  
Saturday December 20th

Gather 'round the crackling flames, sip warm drinks, and revel in the enchanting atmosphere.

Bring something to cook over the fire.

S'Mores fixin's provided!

**Beach Bonfire**

3:30 pm to 5:30 pm

**Music • S'Mores • Fun**

 Moss Beach  Pebble Beach, CA

PLEASE RSVP by 12/16 to have your name put on the guest list at the gate!

JOIN US FOR THE THIRD ANNUAL

# UUCMP Cookie Swap

Sat December 20

4:30-6 PM

490 Aguajito Rd., Carmel

This is an opportunity where you can catch up with old friends and make new ones too! Don't forget to bring along two dozen of your favorite cookies, so that everyone can enjoy a variety of delicious treats.

**Games and merriment Included**

*\*Please bring a copy of the **recipe** in case anyone has **dietary restrictions***

**Contact: JT [jtigerm@comcast.net](mailto:jtigerm@comcast.net) or  
Ann. [annjhnsn@att.net](mailto:annjhnsn@att.net)**

Abit of body text



## December Shared Plate Recipient *UUSC Guest at Your Table (GAYT)*

Every December, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) asks UU Congregations to participate in Guest at Your Table (GAYT), imagining that one of the grass root partners doing justice work around the world is a guest at your table for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. This year, the UUCMP Social Justice Committee voted to make Guest at Your Table, the Shared Plate non-profit for December.

The UUSC is a sister organization to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) that bolsters grassroots-led movements for change around the world. It began as the Unitarian Service Committee in the 1940s to aid European refugees during World War II.

Over the years, UUSC has adjusted with the times to provide support where most needed: from organizing exploited migrating workers in Texas in the 1940s, providing economic support to Central American communities in the 1980s, addressing the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s, and working to stop the impacts of climate change in the 2000s and beyond, UUSC's history has consistently centered the needs and solutions of communities experiencing oppression and injustice. Right now, UUSC is concentrating on supporting groups working on climate justice, democracy and civil liberties, emergency humanitarian crises, and migration.

In our country, we are currently challenged by a national administration that is attacking human rights and international aid. It can feel discouraging. But UUSC keeps helping the work go forward. UUSC's grass-root partners know first-hand that justice doesn't happen overnight. They understand that the work requires diligence and a long-haul commitment. This year, GAYT is highlighting these four efforts:

- Innovative migration justice leaders housing LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers in Philadelphia
- A Honduran community of water defenders carrying on the legacy of the late Juan Lopez
- Political prisoner Ruth Lopez fighting for government accountability and human rights in El Salvador
- Haitian activists fighting for the rights of people in migration

Please go to the [UUSC.org](https://UUSC.org) website for more information on all these efforts and lots more information on the innovative and impactful support that UUSC offers to move the needle of justice forward worldwide.

The 2025-2026 GAYT theme is Plant Seeds of Justice. Your donations will do just that. Thank you.

Konny Murray (Nominator of Guest at Our Table)

### UUCMP Grief and Growth Circle

The UU Grief and Growth Circle will meet in the **Fireplace Room** at the church on **Wednesday, December 17, from 10 - 11:30 a.m.** We share our hearts, stories and resources with any and all dealing with loss. As one year passes and another is on the horizon, we can anticipate finding ourselves in a new place on our unique journeys of grief. Text or call Sharon Miller, 831-601-0403 for more information.





**CELEBRATING LOVE,  
WITH ROOM FOR ALL**

## COMING SOON . . . CANVASS 2026-27

“Celebrating Love, With Room for All” is our stewardship theme for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. With our doors wide open for two services on Sunday mornings, we are creating the space for more people, more connection, and more love.

Our February 15, 2026, service will kick off the 2026-2027 fiscal year canvass, a congregational conversation that celebrates the ways that UUCMP supports us as individuals, as families, and as a community. And going deeper, we will explore how we can do even more in the coming year. It is our opportunity as members and friends of this Beloved Community to envision the future and make individual financial commitments towards making it happen.

Many thanks to our Stewards of past years, and we hope that you will agree again to connect with four of your fellow members. And yes, **NEW STEWARDS** will be enthusiastically welcomed to the team. Incentives: make new connections with fellow members, and an exclusive invitation to the Stewards Appreciation Party in January! Join us! [Stewardship@uucmp.org](mailto:Stewardship@uucmp.org)

## Musical Offerings



The Adult Community Choir continues to grow and meet **every Thursday**

**from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. in the Sanctuary.** This choir is open to everyone, members and non-members alike, to explore singing together. No prior experience is needed. Send me an email ([music@uucmp.org](mailto:music@uucmp.org)) or just stop by. We are currently preparing for two services per month, and we are always looking to expand our choir size!

The UUCMP Community Choir will be preparing to sing two services a month (This month we will sing for the first and third Sundays, on December 7 and December 21. December 21 will be our Music Sunday Service where the

choir will be presenting 5-6 anthems around the theme of "Hope"! The choir will be singing at both services, 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.



**Special Christmas Eve Service!** We will be having a guest violinist, Peter Mellinger, join the music team for the 5 p.m. service on Christmas Eve.

Youth Music has begun again, and we are preparing music for our pageant service in December on December 14. Join us on 1st and 3rd Sundays in the RE room at 10:45 a.m.

-- Jorge Torrez

## Taking the Initiative - The Communications Committee Reaches Out

Responding to the UUCMP Strategic Plan 2024-2027, which tasks the Communications Committee with the job of advertising our church more and better to our community at large, this fall the committee undertook an information campaign including radio (KAZU), newspaper print (The Monterey County Weekly and The Carmel Pine Cone), and The Monterey Bay Parent Magazine. These outlets generally share the demographic of our church membership from the standpoint of new member outreach. All the initiatives invited the listener or reader to join us for worship or check out our website.

In October, we were one of four monthly sponsors of KAZU 90.3 live streaming underwriters, guaranteeing 36,000 twenty-second message impressions during that month.

In October and November, we placed our “Shelter from the Storms” ad in both the Monterey County Weekly and the Carmel Pine Cone for two successive weeks.

At the suggestion of Religious Exploration Director Shannon Morrison, we took an ad in the Monterey Bay Parents Magazine during the months of October and November inviting families to join us for religious exploration.

In November and December we will undertake our usual support of KAZU radio underwriting, but this year instead of using a generic “come join us” message we are tailoring the messages to promote our December special events, the Celtic Christmas Concert, the intergenerational Sunday pageant, the Choir’s Music Sunday and of course the Christmas Eve Service.

There’s still much to do to improve our church’s communications both within our membership structure and to our outside community. We are a committee which welcomes everyone with creative ideas -- ad and jingle composers, spinners, visionaries, designers, word workers, artists, media designers, and editorial experts. If you are interested in the promotion of events, church publicity and public affairs, join us.

Contact Ray Krise, Communications Committee Chair  
[communications@uucmp.org](mailto:communications@uucmp.org)

## SHELTER FROM THE STORMS

The barrage of disasters and ugly politics have separated us. Many of us feel small and ineffectual. We don't know where to turn and have withdrawn from the world.

Unitarian Universalists offer a safe harbor for you and your family. We believe in community. We say YES to JOY, to LOVE, to COURAGE, and to HOPE. Our Sunday service, at 10:30 a.m., and our many community activities show how to face our days with a positive spirit. We strive to do good and to improve the world a little every day—focusing on social justice, environmental, LGBTQ+, and immigration issues. We welcome everyone, and we know that it is going to take all of us to thrive!



To learn more, come to a Sunday service, check out our website at [www.UUCMP.org](http://www.UUCMP.org), or call 831-624-7404.  
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula, 490 Aguajito Road, Carmel CA 93923

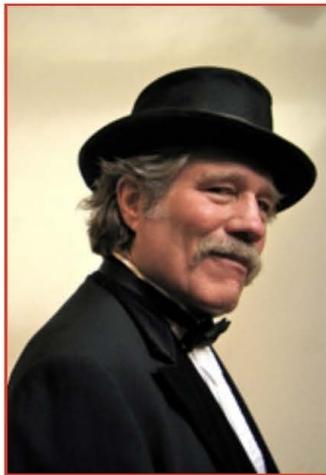
# CELTIC CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 pm  
to benefit the

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula  
490 Aguajito Road, Carmel – 831.624.7404

Tickets are available online through PayPal at [uucmp.org](http://uucmp.org),  
at Bookmark Music, or at the door

\$20, \$15 for seniors, military, and students, kids under 12 are free with a paying adult



Come and celebrate the holidays with this rousing and spirited performance of seasonal songs, music, and tales featuring:

**Taelen Thomas**, renowned bard and storyteller of Carmel Bay

**Shannon Warty**, red-headed, Irish-blooded, natural-born Celtic songbird

\*\*\*\*\*

Taelen will perform selections from Dylan Thomas' masterpiece, A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES, along with stirring tellings of the stories behind other Holiday classics and Shannon will delight audiences with beautiful Celtic music and songs of the season!

Contact: [shannon.e.warty@gmail.com](mailto:shannon.e.warty@gmail.com)

## Join Our Church!

Even in these post pandemic times - *especially* in these times - our church seeks to be a caring community and a welcoming place. We strive to deepen our religious lives and support the spiritual growth of all who join together here, working to build a better world beginning with ourselves.



If you find you resonate with our principles and you are at least 16 years of age, then we invite you to sign our membership book.

Joining the church entitles you to vote at congregational meetings, at which we adopt budgets, elect officers, and direct the course of church programming. Above and beyond that, membership is a personal and public expression of your support of this religious community, the ideals it stands for, and the work it does.

If you are interested in becoming an “official” member of UUCMP, contact the ministers. ([minister@uucmp.org](mailto:minister@uucmp.org))

Please join us!

## Life Enrichment Programs Affinity Groups

Some groups meet both face-to-face and via Zoom in December.

**Men’s Breakfast Group** meets second Saturdays 8:30 a.m. in person at church and at 9 a.m. via Zoom. Contact: Mike Lovell. See page 3.

**Buddhist Sangha** will continue in person and via Zoom on Wednesday evenings, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Contact: Rev. Dennis Hamilton

**T'ai Chi Chih** meets every Tuesday at 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary.



### THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF THE MONTEREY PENINSULA

Welcoming all, we worship together with loving hearts and open minds,  
promoting peace, equality, and respect for the Earth.  
Questioning, reflecting,  
learning, leading . . . we change ourselves  
as we change the world.

### We Know You Have Stories to Tell!

The Worship Associates at UUCMP bring a variety of experiences and perspectives to our weekly services!

If you think it might be fun to help plan and participate in worship services, please talk to one of our ministers about joining our team. Enthusiasm is required, experience is not.

## Cooking in the Holiday Season: Men's I-Help Program at UUCMP Next Meal December 14, 2025

Each second Sunday, UUCMP hosts Men's I-HELP (Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program) welcoming up to twenty-five men with dinner and a safe night's rest. I-HELP is the only emergency shelter open every night in the Monterey area for men and women: a hot meal, a safe place, and a caring community. There are many ways you can help: You can help by donating cooked food, joining us in the kitchen and sharing the meal, or even taking on sponsoring a meal as a group.



### Volunteering Options

- Join the kitchen team to cook nourishing meals for the men.
- Cook something at home or purchase prepared food & drop off on the Sunday of the meal.
- Help set up tables and stay with the men to share the meal.
- Join the organizing team and lead a meal night or organize a group to sponsor a meal.

### Great opportunity for a volunteering or service-learning project through school programs .

Your generosity makes a real difference. If you'd like to get involved, please contact Greg Simmons. 602-361-1015, [Gregs2001@gmail.com](mailto:Gregs2001@gmail.com), text, email or phone call.

Our next meal is **December 14**; we need your help to provide donations of food for meals. Even more than food donations, we are requesting help from the congregation for the kitchen and setup volunteers. We also really need more help to keep this program going so we are also seeking volunteers to become more involved with the UUCMP I-HELP Team to help plan and organize the meals.

Food contributions can include a main course, rotisserie chickens, roast vegetables, potatoes and other sides, bread, drinks and desserts. We are using the Meal Train website to help organize or you can communicate with Greg directly to let him know what you are thinking about contributing or if you have questions. Please, to ensure we can use all the food that is provided, and that we can serve the men a healthy meal, we request no unsolicited food items be provided.

For questions, ideas, or comments: [gregs2001@gmail.com](mailto:gregs2001@gmail.com), 602-361-1015. Text, email or phone calls are all fine.

**Thank you for supporting this important mission of our church!**

### The details:

December 14 Meal train Link: <https://mealtrain.com/vd2o18>

Drop off food Sunday morning or by 3:30 p.m.

**Please label all food with Men's I-HELP.**

Setup and kitchen volunteers can arrive after 3:00 p.m.

If you prefer to donate money, funds are used to purchase staples and some meal items.

To donate: Make your check payable to UUCMP and put Men's I-HELP in the memo line or use this link: <https://uucmp.org/connection-overview/donate/> & specify Men's I-HELP Meals.

Please sign up on Meal Train by Saturday before 5 p.m.

## Art News



Tami B. Sojka

**Kachou Fuugetsu**

November 8th until January 9th.

Tami B. Sojka, a Minnesota native, began exploring photography in her early twenties after receiving her first SLR (single lens reflex) camera. Over the years, her passion has grown through ongoing learning and creativity. Her connection to nature began early, spending time outdoors with friends and walking forest trails in Northern Minnesota with her father.

Having lived in California for over 20 years, Tami draws inspiration from the state's diverse natural beauty. An avid hiker, she loves exploring and photographing California's wild coasts, mountains, deserts, and seasonal blooms.

Her love of travel also extends into her photography, where she strives to capture the distinct character and beauty of each place she visits. Her work has appeared in exhibitions across the U.S. and abroad.



To see more of Tami's work, visit: [tbsojkaphotography.com](http://tbsojkaphotography.com)

Kachou Fuugetsu — “Flower, Bird, Wind, Moon” — is a Japanese phrase that reminds us to find beauty and wisdom in nature's quiet moments.

Through vibrant flowers, ocean tides, and the quiet presence of wildlife, the images included in this exhibit seek to reflect the interconnectedness of all life — inviting us to pause, reflect, and remember our bond with nature and each other.

In a time when so much of the natural world stands at risk, this work is both a meditation and a call to care. It offers hope and a reminder that beauty endures only through our willingness to protect it.

A portion of the proceeds from this exhibit will go to the Big Sur Land Trust, helping preserve California's wild and sacred landscapes — places that remind us of who we are, and what we share.

## President's Corner



Dear Members and Friends of UUCMP:

How swiftly the seasons turn! It feels like we were just greeting trick-or-treaters, and now we find ourselves on the threshold of a new year. December invites us to pause, reflect, and gather—heart to heart, voice to voice—in celebration and community.

Mark your calendars for four special moments this month:

- ◆ Saturday, December 13 at 2:00 p.m. – Come together that afternoon for our Celtic Christmas Concert featuring Shannon Wardo and Taelen Thomas. Their music and poetry promise to enchant. This event is sure to sell out, so get your tickets early!
- ◆ Sunday, December 14 at a single service at 10:30 a.m. – Join us for an intergenerational worship service celebrating the Winter Sol-

stice. This year we'll once again bring to life the magical story of *Bear and the Winter Tree*. Through story, song, and ritual, we'll honor the turning of the year and the light within each of us.

- ◆ Sunday, December 21 at 9:30 and 11:15 a.m. – Our beloved Music Sunday returns, with the UU choir lifting our spirits in both services. Come ready to be moved, inspired, and uplifted.
- ◆ Wednesday, December 24 at 5:00 p.m. – On Christmas Eve, we gather for a candlelit service of songs and readings, celebrating the warmth of the season and the joy of being together.
- ◆ And then it's time to celebrate the new year with a resolve for change in 2026.

As we close the calendar year, let us look back with gratitude at the strength of our community—a shelter in life's storms, a center of love and resilience. May 2026 echo with our values: compassion, justice, interdependence, and joy.

With warmth and hope and a Happy Winter Solstice to you all,

Ray Krise

President, UUCMP Board of Trustees

### KAZU Underwriting

We are continuing to advertise UUCMP on KAZU Public Radio, FM 90.3. A number of us who already regularly contribute to this local public radio station, instead pool our money, by giving it to the church, which then gives it to KAZU. Then UUCMP gets underwriting spots, one for each \$30 contributed. KAZU gets our money, and UUCMP gets our message out to the community.

Please consider contributing to this effort. Make sure your check is clearly labeled "KAZU Gift" in the memo line. These donations will not earn any of the thank you gifts that KAZU sometimes gives. However, they will give UUCMP greater visibility in the community and help us implement our mission of "Changing ourselves as we change the world."



## Vegetarian Recipe

### Vegetarian Black Bean Enchilada Casserole

From [aberdeenskitchen.com](http://aberdeenskitchen.com)



Yield: 6 servings

#### Ingredients

- 24-28 corn tortillas
- 3 ½ cups red enchilada sauce
- 1 tablespoon El Pato or your favorite jalapeño sauce
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 ½ cups sweet yellow corn kernels, cooked
- 2 15 oz can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese and Monterey jack cheese blend
- Fresh cilantro, diced for garnish
- Green onion, thinly sliced for garnish

#### Instructions

Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease a 9" X 13" casserole dish and set aside.

1. Combine enchilada sauce and El Pato in a bowl until fully mixed.
2. Spread about ½ cup on the bottom of the pan.
3. Lay 6-8 tortillas on the bottom of the pan (overlapping is fine).
4. Spread about 1 cup of the mixed sauce onto the tortillas, fully coating them.
5. Sprinkle half the beans, half the corn, and half of the bell pepper on top of the sauced tortillas and top with a third of the cheese blend.
6. Repeat the layering process starting again with the tortillas, then add sauce, then the rest of the beans, bell pepper, corn, and another third of the cheese.
7. Top this second layer with another 8 tortillas. Coat with the remaining sauce and sprinkle the rest of the cheese on top.
8. Place in the middle rack of the oven for 45 - 55 minutes, until the sauce is bubbling, cheese is melted and the middle is cooked through.

Let cool for about 5 minutes. Sprinkle with fresh cilantro and serve immediately.

-- Submitted by Carol LeVa

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December 2025

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Check the WEEKLY NEWS and website for news throughout the month.

If you have any questions, call the office, 624-7404, or e-mail us at [office@uucmp.org](mailto:office@uucmp.org)