



**UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF
BLOOMINGTON
NORMAL**

Love Radically ● Serve Gratefully ● Wonder Daily

[A LGBTQ Welcoming Congregation.](#)
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December 15, 2024

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This Sunday's Worship Service:

The Best Gift

Rev. Jennifer Innis and Claudia Kaufman, Worship Associate

In this season, we are pulled by our love of the world and our heartbreak for it. What boundaries need to be in place for us to live with integrity and live into our generous spirit?

Join us in one of the following ways:

- In person

- Telephone: 1-646-558-8656 and use meeting ID 949-975-206 when prompted.
- Click below to join on Zoom.

[Click Here to Join on Zoom](#)

[Click Here for Order of Service](#)

Upcoming Services



12/22 - All Ages Holiday Pageant and Potluck

Rev. Rebecca Gant and Terina Carter, Director of Religious Exploration

A black bear cub wakes up to see snow for the very first time and begins a quest to find nature's colours. A whole host of animals help him in his search as they bring the colours of the forest to him, one by one. Together all the animals create a magical symbol of the season. We'll celebrate the coming of winter with the story of The Snow Tree and a shared meal.

12/24 - Traditional All Ages Candlelight Christmas Eve

Rev. Rebecca Gant and Jan Baird, Worship Associate

Join us at 4:30 for poetry, readings from the nativity story, carols, and candles.



Holiday Potluck and Fellowship December 22

Join the Membership Team for our monthly brunch and fellowship following the Sunday service on December 22. We'll provide ham, and we invite you to contribute to the meal however you can and/or help with the set-up and clean-up. Use the sign-up form here to let us know how you will participate. We are looking forward to seeing you!

[Sign Up Here](#)

Submitted by the Membership Team

Our services are shared live on zoom, and most-- except All-Ages services-- are recorded and posted on YouTube. You may be seen on Zoom or in the recording if you sit in a pew that is not marked "not visible on camera." If you are concerned about being visible on camera, please speak to Rev. Rebecca and we will find a way to accommodate those concerns.

Want to plan something at the church or do you have something you want people to know about?

Parish News Deadline: Tuesdays at 9 am

Note: The deadline for the 12/28 and 01/04 Parish News is 12/22 at noon!

[Event Registration Form](#)

[Communication Form](#)

This Week's Events

Sunday, December 15

8:45 AM – 9:45 AM Adult Choir (Walker Room)
8:30 AM – 11:45 AM Childcare (Preschool and Childcare Room)
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM Sunday Service (Sanctuary)
10:15 AM – 11:15 AM Children and Youth Religious Exploration (Lower Level/Back Lawn)

11:30 AM – 12:15 PM Sacred Rest (Walker Room)
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM Bloomington Normal Meditation Group (Walker Room)

Monday, December 16

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM Lunch Bunch (Fell Room)

Tuesday, December 17

5:30 PM – 6:15 PM Fairly Frequent Singers (Jr. High and High School) (Walker Room)
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM Blue Holidays Vespers Service (Sanctuary)

Wednesday, December 18

4:45 PM – 5:15 PM Emerson Singers (up to 5th Grade) (Walker Room)
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM Membership Committee Meeting (Irvin Room)
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM Craft Night (Fell Room)
6:30 PM – 8:30 PM Youth Room Covenant Group (Youth Room)
7:00 PM – 8:30 PM Humanist Group (Offsite)

Thursday, December 19

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM Rehearsal for Baroque'n Consort (Walker Room)

Friday, December 20

6:15 PM – 10:00 PM Private Event (Walker Room)

Saturday, December 21

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM Winter Solstice Bonfire (Fell Room, Kitchen, Outdoors)

[To View the Full Events Calendar Click Here](#)



From the Minister's Desk

Rev. Rebecca Gant, Minister

Announcing the Good Vibes Crew!

Earlier this fall, I ran an article in the Parish News asking who might want to be part of a team that plans social events at the church. Kristen Krienert and Alicia Wodika responded (Thank you!) and they are up and running. They are calling themselves the Good Vibes Crew. Their first big event will be a Sober New Year's Eve party at the church on Dec 31 from 6-8:30. Details under Announcements later in this newsletter.

If you've been around the church for a while, you might be asking "So is this just a new version of the Fellowship Committee?" The answer is "Yes and No." This group- like the Fellowship Committee- will plan fun events that build community. They won't be doing all of the same events that the Fellowship Committee did, though, because times and personnel and volunteer capacity have changed. Please join me in thanking them and offering your support for the new energy they bring!

Central Illinois Pulpit Swap December 15

Reverend Jennifer Innis will be our guest preacher on Sunday, December 15. She is from Peoria, IL where she enjoys life with her spouse the Reverend Patrick Price and their children, Nate and Abby. She is happy to be the minister with the Universalist Unitarian Church of Peoria. She also is the Director for Spirit Play, a story-based program for young children in Unitarian Universalism. Rev. Innis is thrilled to offer worship with this beloved community while Rev. Gant is doing the same in Peoria.

Religious Exploration

Terina Carter, Director of Religious Exploration, LRE@uubn.org

Y'all, I don't know about you, but I've heard a definite increase in complaining lately. I've noticed that when I'm complaining a lot, it's usually rooted in anxiety and not really about the topic of my complaint. There are a lot of reasons we complain. Complaining can be our reaction to change, stress, or uncertainty; complaining can be a way to seek validation. For some of us, complaining is how we ask for help finding a solution. For others, complaining is how we process information and it's really about "thinking out loud."

My young adult children learned long ago that when they complained to me about almost anything, I was going to respond with a suggested solution or try to guide them to a solution. That wasn't always what they wanted or needed. Now they will say, "I think I just need to talk this out with someone" OR "I really need help finding a solution." And if I complain to them, they'll ask me what I'm hoping to get out of the complaint.

If you find yourself on either (or both) sides of a complaint filled conversation, these resources have advice that might help.

1. [How to Complain Less](#) (short article)
2. [Managing a Chronic Complainer](#) (article)
3. [What to Say to Someone Who Complains to You](#) (Video)

December All Ages Snow Tree Solstice Pageant

Would you like to be part of the Snow Tree Solstice Pageant? No costumes, speaking, or rehearsals required! You'll have an assigned animal, a sign to hold, and a prop to add to the tree. Let me know you're interested and then come to the run through at 8:45 am on Sunday, December 22.

Sacred Rest

Sunday, December 15, 11:30-12:15, Church, with childcare

Sunday, December 22, 4:00-4:45, Online, Email LRE@uubn.org for a monthly reminder with the link

During these monthly gatherings, we'll hear a reading from Rest as Resistance by Tricia Hersey; rest together; reflect on rest as resistance in a capitalist society, and leave with a "practice to resist grind culture" from [Tricia Hersey's Rest Deck](#). Bring a blanket or I will have some to share.

Winter Solstice Bonfire

Saturday, December 21, 6:00, Church

Bundle up and join a bonfire celebration of the Winter Solstice. Hot chocolate and bonfire snacks will be set up outside. RSVP to LRE@uubn.org for snack planning.

For an instant, in the stillness,
the chiming of the celestial spheres will be heard
as earth hangs poised
in the crystalline darkness, and then
gracefully
tilts.
- Rebecca Ann Parker

Online Biblical Literacy Part 1

Wednesdays, February 12-March 19, 7:00pm-8:30 pm CT, Online

Register by email to LRE@uubn.org.

First Unitarian Church of Dallas is offering an online session of "Biblical Literacy for Unitarian Universalists." This is a unique opportunity to explore the Bible through a Unitarian Universalist lens. The 11-week course will be offered in two parts, one in the winter and one in the fall of 2025.

Part I includes the sessions:

- Approaching the Bible
- Many Books, Many Sources
- God and Covenant
- Jesus in the Gospels
- Kingdom of God Parables
- Creation Stories

Free for current Faith Forward congregation subscribers (that's us!).



Love at the Center

I'm very excited that to offer Love at the Center: UU Values and Covenants as a new small group option! Thanks to a tip from Nancy Bragg, I was able to request the curriculum at no charge to our congregation.

This small group, 11-session program provides an in-depth exploration of our shared faith within the context of our personal identities and experiences, diverse communities, and relationship with the world. If you're new to Unitarian Universalism or are ready to explore the new values and covenants voted on at last summer's General Assembly, this is the program for you!

Generally sessions are paired, so you can expect a focus on two values in the first session and the related covenant statements in the second session. Each value session will focus on questions that explore ourselves and Unitarian Universalism through deep questioning and listening. Putting our beliefs in action in our covenantal faith will be explored through experiences and storytelling that will illuminate how we want to be as faithful people.

Love as a Value:

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values.

Love as a Covenant:

We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

-UUA Article II, passed June 2024

Together, our group will learn to hold each other with love, trust, curiosity and generosity as we explore Unitarian Universalist values and covenants. As we grow our spiritual lives and explore our covenantal faith, we will be “taking care of one another” and ourselves. Holding each other in love seeks to inspire us to bring love out in the world.

Rev. Rebecca and I are working on a schedule that includes consideration of each of our sabbatical times.

Online Parents and Caregivers as Sexuality Educators

Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm, Online

Register at the link: <https://forms.gle/uDdu1HNhMpt7ZEB4A>

A program for Unitarian Universalist parents and caregivers who seek support and skills to be effective sexuality educators of their children. Adults are invited to ask: How can I embody my role as my child's primary sexuality educator in a way that expresses my UU values and faith?

Many Unitarian Universalist children participate in Our Whole Lives (OWL), the lifespan, holistic, values-based sexuality education program provided by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ, and they may also receive sexuality education in school. However, OWL encourages, and this program aims to nurture, parents and caregivers in their role as their children's primary sexuality educators. Trusted adults carry extraordinary power to influence their children's attitudes and values around sexuality. Many adults struggle to wield that power with intentionality, grace, and confidence. These sessions invite parents and caregivers to find support, insight, and courage with one another.

The sessions are designed to meet the needs of adults raising children of a wide age range, from elementary through high school. Like OWL workshops, these sessions build comfort in talking about sexuality-related topics and offer skill-building activities. Participants are invited to engage deeply with their hopes and fears, their values and practices. This program emphasizes the ongoing adult responsibility to seek and share accurate, current information, as needed, with their child or youth.

Like OWL programs, this program conveys a holistic view of sex and sexuality, encompassing sensuality, intimacy, sexual health and reproduction, sexual identity, and societal sexualization. Participants identify their hopes, examine their concerns, and frame both in the context of their children's lives, acknowledging that their children face different circumstances and pressures than did earlier generations.

The sessions also help adults build skills for healthy family communication. Communication is the foundation of this program, just as it is the foundation of healthy relationships within and beyond families.

01/08 Hopes and Concerns for Kids' Sexual Health
01/15 Communication: How Do We Talk about Sex?

01/22 Gender Identity: Exploring Emotions around Gender
01/29 Sexual Orientation: Supporting Self-Discovery
02/05 Relationships: Guiding with Wisdom
02/12 Sexual Health: Be a Trusted Source
02/19 Decision Making: Ready, Set, Let Go!
02/26 Consent: Building Healthy Boundaries
03/05 Social Media: Integrity in a Changing World
03/12 Pornography: It's Not Sex Ed

Online Small Groups with Tom Clemens

Email Tom at [REDACTED] or text/call [REDACTED] to join any of the following Zoom discussions as participant or listener. You will receive the Zoom link the day before the session.

The purpose of the **First Sunday Nonfiction Book Group** is to educate ourselves in order to take actions toward justice for all in public policy.

- January 5, 2025, 2-3 P.M. *The Message*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Penguin Random House (One World imprint), 2024. Includes his analysis of the Gaza situation.
- February 2, 2025, 2-3 P.M. *Invisible Doctrine: The Secret History of Neoliberalism*, by George Monbiot and Peter Hutchison, Penguin Random House (Crown imprint), 2024. On economic ideology and public policy in the United States.

LET US READ A NOVEL (LURAN) #9 *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, 1884, will meet for the fourth and last time on Monday, December 16, 7-8 P.M. on Zoom to discuss chapters 29-42, which ends the book.

In early January, I will send an email to the registrants for LURAN#10 *James*, by Percival Everett, Doubleday, 2024, a re-casting of the Huck Finn story from the point of view of the runaway Jim. Then we will organize the reading and discussion schedule for the book. 10 registered

The next Share Your Writing session will be toward the end of January, TBD. Any kind of writing in any stage of development is welcome. 6 registered.

Announcing a new discussion focused on a book about climate change: *What If We Get It Right: Visions of Climate Futures*, by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, Penguin Random House, 2024. An opportunity to reflect on individual and collective approaches. Register by sending me an email by January 1, 2025, to give yourself and the world a new year's gift of thought and action. 2 registered.

Social Justice Team News

Chad Kahl, Team Lead

Sweatshirts and Sweatpants Tree

We have had the tradition of collecting items (mittens, socks, underwear) under our Christmas tree for those in need. This year, let's keep up our giving and give sweatshirts and sweatpants to the Compassion Closet at Carle! Patients without other options – most often from the Emergency Department – leaving the hospital can do so with dignity with our donations.

For the rest of December, bring in new sweatshirts and/or sweatpants. We will keep the focus on these two items so that Carle can be stocked for the rest of the winter and spring season to help those in need.

Thank you for your generosity during this holiday season.

-Submitted by Camille Ehlers, Community Concerns and Social Justice Committee

Take Action

Ask Congress to pass the Fulfilling Promises to Afghan Allies Act. A bipartisan group of Senators has attached an amendment (S.AMDT 3290) to the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2025. Negotiations are taking place to combine the Senate and House versions of the NDAA. Ask your Senators and Congressperson to include this amendment in the final version of the NDAA. This amendment will provide a pathway to legal permanent status for eligible Afghans who have been in legal limbo since they were evacuated to the U.S. because they helped our forces in their country. Go to

[fulfillfpaa/index.html](#) for more info contact Debbie Kerrigan at

submitted by Debbie Kerrigan for the Social Justice Team

Prison Ministry News

Many thanks to all of you who wrote holiday cards to people in prison! Our congregation sent out 46 cards! Thanks to Babs Allen for donating beautiful Yuletide cards for this!

Cindy Cotton was able to hold the Chalice Circle at Logan on Dec. 7, after staffing problems made the prison cancel several scheduled meetings in the past. Babs will hold a Yuletide Service on December 18 for the women at Logan Prison.

For more information, please contact Julie Prandi (

Submitted by Julie Prandi for the Social Justice Team

Stewardship

Emile Garneau, Chair

Pledge Drive Progress

As of Dec. 10, 2024, 121 families pledged \$367,220, 84% of our 2025 goal of \$438,204. There are about 30 families who have not pledged yet.

If we were to stop right now, our deficit would be \$70,984.

Our pledge drive will end 12/31/2024; our budget will be proposed and any deficit that exists at that time will be addressed in January 2025.

Please pledge now.

Thank you,

The Stewardship Committee: Linda Johnston, Nancy Armstrong, Jack Pace, Claire Hedden, Rain Johnson, Emile Garneau

Announcements

All-Ages Sober New Year's Eve Party

Tuesday, December 31, 6:00-8:30pm, Fell Room

Join us to welcome in 2025 with an All-Ages Sober New Year's Eve Party on Dec 31st from 6-8:30pm in the Fell Room! We'll have fun activities to help you set resolutions for yourself and for the church, games, a small-bite potluck, and mocktails. We'll also have an early-bird count down to 8pm, so you and yours can be snug in bed (or available for further festivities) well before midnight!

Sign up for setup, clean up, and small-bite potluck at the button below.

For more information, please contact Kristen Krienert at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

-Submitted by Kristen Krienert and Alicia Wodika, the Good Vibes Crew

[Sign Up for NYE Party Here](#)



Want to Check Out How Worship Gets Planned?

January 26, 3-6 PM

Are you curious about how the Sunday worship services come to life? The Worship Team gathers quarterly to plan future worship services. Anyone is welcome to attend our planning sessions-- whether you just want to check it out or feel like you might want to be on the team! Join us!

GET IN THE SLEIGH



It's Yule again! Folks from Many Paths CUUPs are headed to their sister group in Peoria, Keepers of the Great Grove CUUPs, for a Yule celebration on 12/21. If you want to carpool or have a vehicle that can hold other people, please let Babs Allen know (she is coordinating this effort). We will meet in the church parking lot at 4:15pm and leave at 4:30pm. The fun in Peoria starts at 5:30pm, ritual at 6 and potluck after!

What is the Committee on Shared Ministry (COSM)?

Did you know that there is a group of congregants that works with the Minister to assess and guide the ministries of the church? The Committee on Shared Ministry (COSM) serves to understand, assess, support, and advocate for robust and shared ministry throughout the context of congregational life. The Minister and the COSM are asked to center, to balance, and to guide the congregation in conversation with the Board, lay leadership, members, and friends of UUBN. As part of their monthly meetings, the COSM members share with the Minister any feedback they have about how things are going in the congregation.

COSM membership is appointed by the Board in conjunction with the Minister and currently consists of four members: Sandy Aronen, Kristen Johnson, Carol Torrens, and Janet Tulley, who meet monthly with Reverend Rebecca. COSM welcomes feedback of the UUBN community and is planning a more formal opportunity for this after the New Year. For more information, please contact Rev. Rebecca or any of the COSM members.

Submitted by the Committee on Shared Ministry (Janet Tulley wrote the article)

Game Night for Adults - CANCELLED IN DEC

Game Night for Adults is NOT happening in December. William Wilson, Mars Scott, Babs Allen, and Pamela Morgan hope everyone takes time to play some games with friends and family this holiday season. We look forward to seeing you in January!!!



This Month's Community Plate Recipient

INtegrity Counseling

INtegrity Counseling is a community-based, non-profit counseling agency located in the heart of Bloomington's west side. INtegrity enables a growing team of concerned professionals to partner in providing counseling, outreach, and community education on topics such as grief and loss, addiction, parenting, and coping skills for those with mental or emotional disorders. Their vision is "Stigma free mental health support for all." They serve all members of the community, regardless of race, gender, belief, orientation, or economic status. They do not have a set fee for counseling, but instead, use a "pay as you can" method and ask clients to contribute what they are able to afford for counseling.

To donate to INtegrity Counseling, make out your check to INtegrity Counseling and deliver to the church. Donations can also be made via the Breeze Online Giving website by clicking the button below or from your smartphone when you [download the app](#). Our subdomain is uubn.

[Learn More!](#)

[Donate Here](#)

STEWARDSHIP

Pledges from our members and friends support the ministries of the church. If you haven't made your pledge for 2025, here is the link: <https://uubn.org/wp/make-pledge/>

If you need to adjust your pledge, email Nancy Armstrong at [REDACTED] or contact the office by phone or at office@uubn.org.

Communications are confidential.

Ongoing Group Gatherings

Covenant Groups:

Lay-led small groups that meet once a month to deepen and expand the ministry of the congregation through spiritual and emotional connection. Email Terina to join a small group.

Monday Lunch Bunch:

Want to start your week with good company and lively, informal conversation? Join us in the Fell Room with or without your lunch. No reservations required. All topics are welcome. We light the chalice at 11:45 AM and release the flame at 1:00 PM. Coffee and tea provided. Hosted by the Membership Team.

Contacts

Staff

Rev. Rebecca Gant, Minister

minister@uubn.org

Available by appointment. Click this link to see when she's available:

<https://calendly.com/revrebeccagant/30min>

Terina Carter, Director of Religious Exploration

LRE@uubn.org

Available by Appointment

Blair Broughton, Office Manager

office@uubn.org

Office hours vary. Please make an appointment: 217-722-3586 (call or text)

Charlie [REDACTED] Director

Bob Mangia [REDACTED] Air Director

Molly Hjelle, AV Technician

avstaff@uubn.org

Anastasia Guzman, AV Technician

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Sara Kaeb, Child Care
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Adrienne Alt, Child Care
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Board Information

President: Larissa Armstrong
Vice President: Julie Prandi
Secretary: Chad Kahl
Treasurer: Nancy Armstrong
Directors: Karla Bailey-Smith, Brad Bell,
Jill Enchelmayer, Hubert Morales, and
Richard Seehuus.

Monthly Board Meetings are in Irvin
Room and Online at 6:30 on the Second
Tuesday of each month. All are welcome to
attend. Contact the the board for the
Zoom Link.

Contact the board at
uubnboard@uubn.org.

Trustees

Jack Pace, Paul Packard, and Brad Boesdorfer

Committees

Aesthetics
Building and Grounds
Committee on Shared Ministry
Finance and Stewardship
Denominational Affairs
Memorial Garden Stewards
Safety

Doug Johnson
Dick Hansen
Janet Tulley
Emile Garneau
Nancy Armstrong
Debby Funk
Julie Prandi

Teams

Membership and Outreach
Right Relations
Community Concerns
Good Vibes Crew
Green Sanctuary
Helping Hands
History
Religious Exploration (RE)
Social Justice
Worship and Music
Pastoral Care

Kathy Packard
Carolyn Moon and Pamela Morgan
Camille Ehlers
Kristen Krienert and Alicia Wodika
Nancy Armstrong
Carolyn Pitts
Joan Banks
Erin Ripley-Gataric, Terina Carter
Chad Kahl
Claudia Kaufman, Rev. Rebecca Gant
Rev. Rebecca Gant

To obtain contact information for the leads of these groups please see the [online directory](#) or [email the office](#).



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