

The Unitarian  
Congregation  
of Taos  
December 2023  
Bulletin Board



Sun., Dec. 3	Service: <i>Aloha and Adios</i> , Rev. Gary Kowalski
Sun., Dec. 10	Sharing Circle: <i>Beauty</i>
Sun., Dec. 17	Service: <i>Holy, Holy, Holy</i> Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Tue., Dec. 19	UCOT Women's Lunch, Martyrs, 12:15 p.m.
Wed., Dec. 20	UCOT Men's Group, 4:00 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 24	Christmas Eve <i>Morning</i> Service, Rev. Jeanne Montclair
Sun., Dec. 31	Burning Bowl Ritual, Donna Collins

**On My Mind**  
**Rev. Gary Kowalski**

Just over a month ago Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israeli settlers shocking in its brutality. Hundreds including women, children and the elderly were taken hostage as missiles rained down on Israeli cities. Casualties were in the thousands. The following day, Israeli Defense Forces began a bombardment of Gaza that has killed many more thousands, burying civilians with no place to flee beneath the rubble of a ruined city starved for potable water, electricity, food and medical supplies. The cost in suffering has been enormous.

The roots of this conflict are ancient, as people of different faiths and ethnicities (Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim, Christian, Druze, Bahai, and more) struggle to live side by side on a small piece of real estate that three major world religions claim as holy ground.

Warfare is not the answer, for while religious extremists espouse violence, the core teaching of all great faiths counsels a peaceful co-existence for the world's peoples founded on justice and mutual respect.

For hostilities to cease, the Palestinian people need a path toward an unoccupied homeland, with viable borders and self-determination. Israelis need security and an assurance that their neighbors are willing to accept the permanent presence of a Jewish state.

The Hebrew Bible envisions a time when swords will be beaten into plowshares, when each shall live beneath their own vine or fig tree, and none shall make them afraid. It is time for world leaders to step back from the precipice of wider war and begin a process of reconciliation that will end the bloodshed and bring about just and lasting peace. — Gary



**Aloha and Adios**  
**Rev. Gary Kowalski**

Sunday, December 3, 11.a.m.

Our minister of the last eight years, Reverend Gary Kowalski, will deliver his final address this morning, a meditation on the crucial phrases (Hello, Goodbye, Thank You, and I'm Sorry) that we need to be savvy travelers through the world and through life.

**Holy, Holy, Holy**  
**Rev. Munro Sickafoose**

Sunday, December 17, 11 a.m.

This time of year calls us inward. What do we hold sacred? What do we revere and have reverence for? These questions are for each of us... and all of us. All we have to do is ask.

**Christmas Eve**  
**Rev. Jeanne Montclair**  
Sunday, December 24, 11 a.m.

Christmas has been called the most magical time of the year. Yet some of us dread it; the ostracism of religiosity, the commercialism, the expectations, the troubling expenses, and the deepening of Winter. As we tune in — or tune out — to the Christmas fervor, let us listen to the advice of two well-known Jewish men: Jesus, who said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" which is great IF you do love yourself. And not such great advice if you have learned not to. Here, let's incorporate the words of Leonard Cohen, who reminds us there is still beauty, and the sacred, in our imperfection when he says: "Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." Let's let the light of this joyful season into our hearts this Christmas.

## **Burning Bowl Ritual**

**Donna Collins**

Sunday, December 31, 11 a.m.

The new year calls us forward, filled with mystery. As we turn toward 2024, we take a final glimpse of the past year and reckon with all that it held for us. What parts of our lives — what things, ideas, people, ways of living — have become obstacles to our becoming the people we want to be, the people we need to be? What's holding you back? What's getting in the way of your living as fully as you'd like to? What might you burn away from your current life? What will you relinquish?

## **SHARING CIRCLES**

### **Beauty**

December 10, 11 a.m.

*"I don't think of the misery but of the beauty that still remains." — Anne Frank*

*"Beauty in things exists in the mind which contemplates them." — David Hume*

Beauty is one of the foundational values, in the same category as truth and goodness. Many philosophers believe that beauty pervades the natural world and extends to the farthest reaches of the cosmos. Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy, devoted entirely to the study of the beautiful. But today, we'll bring it down to the personal.

Do you have an object you love simply for its beauty? If so, please bring it to the circle and share with us what it means to you. How did it make its way into your hands? How does it make you feel when you look at, use, or interact with it? If it's too large to bring, you could photograph it and bring the photo. If it's lost or gone, perhaps you could just tell us about it.

## **Open Topic Sharing Circle**

December 24, 11 a.m.

The Open Topic Sharing Circle falls on Christmas Eve this month, so in lieu of the circle, we'll celebrate the season by having a Christmas Eve *morning* service instead. See the flip side of this newsletter.

## **UCOT Men's Group**

December 20, 4:00 p.m.

The UU Men's Group will meet in person on Wednesday, December 20, at 4:00 p.m. Contact Chuck Fawns [charles.fawns@gmail.com](mailto:charles.fawns@gmail.com) for location.

## **Music Committee News**

**Gael Minton**

In early October, the opening concert of the Taos Chamber Music Group featured percussionist Douglas Cardwell playing the Varied Trio of Lou Harrison with Elizabeth Baker on violin and Vicki Ray on piano. [Listen to the 1987 premier in Singapore](#) (20 minutes).

Douglas Cardwell, former principal timpanist of the New Mexico Symphony orchestra, has a percussion studio in Albuquerque, where fine instruments are available as well as percussion classes with a staff trained by Cardwell. For background and a 2021 Santa Fe Youth Symphony Masterclass by Douglas Cardwell, [listen here](#).



*Douglas Cardwell*

Researching this article led to a remarkable 1780 piece by Johan Carl Fischer for eight timpani and orchestra, performed by the Venezuelan Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra June 2020 [Symphony with 8 Obligato Timpani](#) (14 minutes). Diego Montes (19 y.o.) is the timpanist. And then, [Douglas Cardwell playing the timpani cadenza of the Fischer Symphony without orchestra](#), a 2016 recording.

If you are curious about the timpani, check out this [comprehensive note](#).

## **Sack Lunches for the Men's Shelter**

Sunday, December 17

After the service on December 17, we'll be assembling lunches for the Men's Shelter. Please sign up for what you'd like to bring using [Signup Genius](#). The link will be in UCOT's weekly email and the online newsletter. We will set up the assembly line to put them together immediately following the service. The shelter has requested that we only bring 24 bags, so it will only take a few minutes and it's fun! The men are very appreciative. Please email Annette Rubin with questions: [rubin.annette@gmail.com](mailto:rubin.annette@gmail.com). Thank you for your kind assistance.

## UCOT Book Group Pauses in December

In a nod to the busy holiday week, the UCOT Book Group will not meet in December. Instead we will meet again on January 25 at 10:30 at SOMOS discussing "The Covenant of Water" by Abraham Verghese. Happy Holidays!

## Lay Leader Training December 17

UCOT will be holding a Lay Leader training for those interested in Lay Leading for 2024. The only requirement for participating as a Lay Leader is being a member of UCOT.

The training will take place immediately after the Sunday, December 17th service, and will be conducted by Mya Coursey. The training should not last more than 1 hour. Snacks will be provided.

If you are a current Lay Leader who wishes to continue to LayLead in 2024, or you are a newcomer to Lay Leading and are interested being a part of the team, please plan to attend this training!

For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Joe Mazza using this email address: [joem.mazza@gmail.com](mailto:joem.mazza@gmail.com). Also, please contact him if you are planning to attend. Thank you!

## UCOT Women's Lunch

December 19, 12:15 p.m.  
Third Tuesday Monthly  
Martyrs Steakhouse  
RSVP [here](#)



We will once again meet at Martyrs on Tuesday, December 19, at 12:15 in their separate back meeting space to enjoy a meal and conversation with UCOT members and their friends. Join us as we enjoy delicious food and the company of other amazing women. Kindly RSVP to Sara Sautter, [slsautter@gmail.com](mailto:slsautter@gmail.com) by 10:00 a.m. on December 19.



### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 5 Mimi Owensby
- 9 David Owensby
- 20 Martha Grossman
- 23 Emily Gillispie
- 25 Joann Stringer
- 26 Gary Kowalski
- 27 Annette Rubin

happy  
holidays!