

The Unitarian
Congregation
of Taos
December 2024
Bulletin Board



Sun., Dec. 1 Service: *Bells at Midnight*, Rev. Diana Davies
Sun., Dec. 8 Sharing Circle: *Letting Go*
Sun., Dec. 15 Service: *Into the Darkness*, Rev. Diana Davies
Tue., Dec. 17 UCOT Women's Lunch, 12:15 p.m., Martyrs
Wed., Dec. 18 UCOT Men's Group, 4:00 p.m.
Thu., Dec. 19 UCOT Book Group, 10:30 a.m., SOMOS
Sun., Dec. 22 Sharing Circle: *Open Topic*
Sun., Dec. 29 No 5th Sunday Programming. Happy Holidays!

Right Now, It's Like This
Rev. Diana Davies

This is a dark time, in so many ways. Night falls so early now, and lately the sun has been hiding behind clouds. For many of us after the election, life feels draped in a curtain of dark foreboding.

And yet, there is beauty in the darkness of winter. The longest night of the year, the Winter Solstice, is an opportunity for us to remember how awesome nature is, how amazing it is that we happen to be on a planet that happens to be perfectly situated in relation to a star, so that we get just enough warmth but not too much. And that our planetary home doesn't just rotate on an axis so that there is day and night, but it tilts so that, as it revolves around the sun, there is also summer and winter.

The Solstice reminds us that we human beings are impossibly small in the big scheme of things. That our basic existence depends on something that is absolutely beyond our control and that existed long before us and will go on long after us. And yet, while we're here, shining our little light, it makes a difference.

Across time, cultures and faiths, in the face of darkness, we celebrate light. The lights that we make at this time of year — Diwali lamps, the candles of Kwanzaa and Hanukkah, the lights on the branches of the Bodhi tree, Christmas lights on homes and Christmas trees, solstice bonfires and yule logs — these are the unique and beautifully diverse ways we respond to a common experience, and the ways we reflect a shared truth: that the light of the sun, which comes to us as a gift, as something that simply IS, is the same light that is within each one of us. It is what we choose to do with that light that matters.



Bells at Midnight
Rev. Diana Davies

Sunday, December 1, 11 a.m.

On this first Sunday of Advent, we'll explore the stories behind two beloved Christmas carols written by Unitarians: Edmund Sears's "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," and "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," based on a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The histories of both works bear a special significance for many of us this year, because both were written during times of great turmoil and grief. Sears's lyrics reflect his opposition to the Mexican-American War, and Longfellow's poem was written during the Civil War. What can these two carols teach us about faith and commitment in a time of struggle?



Into the Darkness
Rev. Diana Davies

Sunday, December 15, 11 a.m.

From the builders of Newgrange more than 5,000 years ago, to the Incans who greeted the Winter Solstice in a cave in Machu Picchu, to the rabbis who set Hanukkah to begin at the very darkest time of the year, ancient peoples around the world recognized that to truly know the light, you first need to be buried in the deepest darkness. Today, on the Sunday before the Winter Solstice, we celebrate both darkness and the possibility for light.

SHARING CIRCLES

Letting Go

December 8, 11 a.m.

We've all recently experienced a national election that left most of us in a state of shock and disappointment. Some say it's too early to move on, but what are we doing to ourselves if we choose to dwell in the heartache and cling to the fear?

On this Sunday, we want to hear where you are NOW. And maybe where you hope to be next month or next year. No apologies for what you're experiencing, but perhaps a realization that holding on to fear and dread are draining you of vital energy.

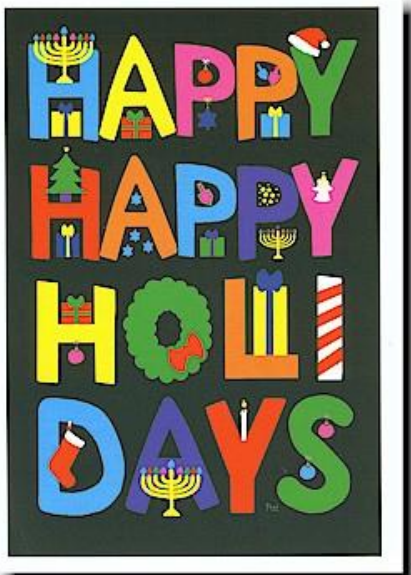
How can we strike a balance between caring about our country and those who are especially vulnerable in the proposed Project 2025, and caring for ourselves and those around us, including each other and those we meet along the way?

Come share what it might look like for you to eventually let go and live free of the burden. If you're not ready to let go, we welcome you to share that as well. Or tell us about something else in your life that you either can't or won't release — or, conversely, something you were able to release.

Open Topic Sharing Circle

December 22, 11 a.m.

Using a virtual "talking stick," each person can speak in turn, sharing whatever is in their hearts or on their minds in the moment.



UCOT Women's Lunch

December 17, 12:15 p.m.

(Third Tuesday Monthly)

Martyrs Steakhouse

RSVP [here](#)

We will meet at Martyrs on Tuesday December 17 at 12:15 p.m. in their separate meeting space at the rear of the property to enjoy a meal and conversation with UCOT women members and their friends.

Join us as we enjoy delicious food and the company of amazing women. RSVP by 10 a.m. December 17 to rubin.annette@gmail.com.

UCOT Men's Group

December 18, 4:00 p.m.

(Third Wednesday Monthly)

The UCOT Men's Group will meet in person on Wednesday, December 18, at 4 p.m. Contact Chuck Fawns at charles.fawns@gmail.com for this month's location.

UCOT Game Night

No game night in December

We will return to the fun in January!



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

UCOT Book Group

December 19, 10:30 a.m., SOMOS

(This month we meet on the Third Thursday instead of the Fourth because of Christmas)

In December, we will take a break and not read a book. We will, however, meet on the third Thursday, December 19, 2024, 10:30 a.m., at SOMOS, to discuss our readings for 2025. Currently we are scheduled to read *North Woods*, by Daniel Mason, in January 2025, and *Beautiful Souls: The Courage and Conscience of Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times*, by Eyal Press, in February 2025. We will need to choose nine more books to round out the year.

To those who can attend, please bring up to five suggestions for books to read with a 25-word (or so) synopsis of each. If you can't attend, feel free to email to me up to five suggestions with the short synopses. Those present at the meeting will cull all suggestions to 15. It should be fun! Then, Barbara will distribute that list for a vote by our regulars, so "no worries," if you're out of town or have company for the holidays. Your voice will be heard.

Keep reading! Barbara Martinez 😊

Music Committee News

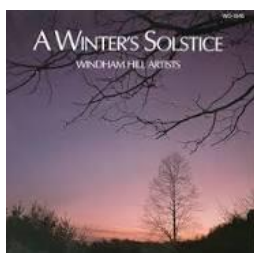
Gael Minton

Reminder of singing practice each Service

Sunday: Martha Grossman will lead a 10:30 a.m. practice at the Lodge on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. On these Sundays, gather round the piano and sing the hymns planned for that service.

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The Winter Solstice has been a dominant celebration for our family since the 1970s. Perhaps you are familiar with the beautiful acoustic sounds from Windham Hill Records (1977-96) led by guitarist Will Ackerman. "Windham Hill produced music that was difficult to define, with elements of classical, folk, and jazz, nearly all of it instrumental, acoustic, and mellow" (quote from Wikipedia). Windham Hill musicians produced five Winter Solstice albums – the first in 1985 (39 minutes).



[*A Winter's Solstice*](#)

Enjoy this [Windham Hill: Winter Solstice 2012 music video sampler \(2 minutes\)](#) and much more of this historic group available online.

Blue Christmas: Acknowledging Sadness and Grief During the Holiday Season

Wednesday, December 11, 6:00-7:30 pm,
Bent Lodge

As we head into the winter holidays, many of us may find that we are just not feeling the joy and jolliness that a constant barrage of Christmas songs, advertisements, and holiday cards tell us we are supposed to be feeling at this "most wonderful time of the year." If you have recently lost a loved one, or the holidays have a way of making even a long-ago loss seem like a fresh wound; if you or a loved one are facing serious illness or cognitive decline; if you struggle with financial difficulties, seasonal depression, or addiction; or if you are grieving for any other reason, this can feel like a particularly lonely time of year. But you are not alone. This "Blue Christmas" session is not a therapy session but an opportunity to share our stories in a comforting and confidential setting and to try out a few centering and calming spiritual practices.

Attendance is capped at 12 people and pre-registration is required by December 9.

You can register through ChMeetings [here](#), or contact Rev. Diana directly at dkalid64@gmail.com.



The Longest Night

Saturday, December 21, 5:00-6:00 pm,
Taos Plaza

On the night of the Winter Solstice, the Taos community gathers to remember the unhoused people and others who died within the past year. The Threshold Choir, featuring several UCOT members, will perform. Join us to light candles and stand in solidarity with and care for the most marginalized members of our community.