



# First Unity Church of St. Louis

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2023 Volume V  
November/December

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Issue 6

## *Minister's Corner*



## PRECIOUS GIFTS

The fast-approaching Christmas season can be a time of joyful celebration. We might envision a Hallmark holiday -- a loving family gathering around a beautifully decorated Christmas tree as they gaze out the picture window to the unspoiled glistening snow, eagerly anticipating opening gifts that will be perfect in every way. But what about the pressure in finding the perfect gift for everyone on our list? What about all the holiday preparations -- the planning, shopping, wrapping, baking, decorating? It may seem like just too much! One of my friends called me one year on Dec. 22 and said, "I'll be so glad when Christmas is over! Next year, I'm taking the whole family on a cruise. It would probably be cheaper & I would be far less exhausted."

In the book *How to Let God Help You*, Unity Co-founder Myrtle Fillmore cautions against overdoing at Christmas. She writes, "It would be more in conformity with the Christ Spirit to use the time in sending out to our family and friends the joyful thoughts that come spontaneously from the Christ love." Decades later, the great American philosopher, The

Grinch, decided, "Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas means a whole lot more."

The Advent season *is* a time of preparation, but it is about more than decorating and gift-giving. It's a time for us to rejoice in the ancient story of the birth of Jesus, and it's a time to celebrate the rebirth of our own indwelling Christ Nature. This is the season for us to claim and share those gifts that are the most precious of all – the inner gifts of *FAITH*, *PEACE*, *LOVE*, and *JOY*:

#### FAITH

True faith is one of our 12 spiritual powers, a deep inner knowing that there is a Reality beyond our physical senses. We look beyond illness to wholeness, beyond lack to abundance, beyond fear to faith. Faith moves mountains.

#### PEACE

Jesus calmed the raging storm by saying "Peace, be still!" When we pause, breathe, turn within, and become still, we align in Divine Peace – the peace that passes all understanding. As our hearts are filled with peace, the world is transformed.

#### LOVE

Love has been called the master power, the power that attracts us to our good. Christ Love is our nature. We look for every opportunity to be God's love in expression. Love rules!

#### JOY

Joy is truly a gift of spirit. It enables us to see the best in every situation and to be grateful for what happens in our lives. Through joy, we celebrate that God is All and God is in all situations.

My Christmas wish for everyone in our blessed spiritual community and beyond is expressed in this Christmas prayer adapted from James Dillet Freeman:

May there always be room in your heart  
for divinity to find a birthing place.  
May you be holy as the angels,  
faithful as the shepherds,  
humble as the cattle,  
wise as the Wise Men.

May you have the compassion of Mary  
and the understanding of Joseph.  
and may the blessings of the Christ child be yours,  
not because of a birth night long ago.  
but because Christ love is born in you today!

Have a blessed Christmas,  
Rev. Jan

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#### Minister, Jan Mourning

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## First Unity Church of St. Louis Newsletter

November/December 2023

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Lynn Mark

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### Joy Unspeakable by Lynn Mark

From a recent online Meditation comes a quote by Dr. Barbara Holmes, found in her book, *Joy Unspeakable*. Dr. Holmes is a spiritual teacher, activist, writer and scholar focused on African American spirituality, mysticism, cosmology and culture. She is a frequent contributor for Father Richard Rohr's Center for Action and Contemplation. Although he is a Catholic priest, Unity ministers often refer to him as one of them because his outlook is so aligned with Unity teachings.

Dr. Holmes writes: "When you least expect it, during the most mundane daily tasks, a shift of focus occurs. This shift bends us toward the universe, a cosmos of soul and spirit, bone and flesh, which constantly reaches toward divinity. Ecclesial organizations want to control access to this milieu but cannot. The only divisions between the sacred and the secular are in the minds of those who believe in and reinforce the split..."

After reading that and thinking about it for a few minutes I thought about the occasions when I get a sense of great joy. They happen, as she says when I least expect them. Suddenly it occurred to me that we are going into the fall and early winter season in the next few months. I felt a sense of gratitude for what the season will bring – Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. That accumulation of experiences brings me a big serving of happy when I think of the opportunities they bring.

Last week I was walking out of the building where US Immigration Services is located. At my side were two clients and we were all smiling like there was no tomorrow. We had just accomplished something life changing for them. As we were walking, I stopped and declared, "I'm so happy for you that I can hardly stand it!". We all paused together and had a group hug. My client is overjoyed because our next step is to bring her two young sons here from the Philippines. Anyone walking past us would have felt the gratitude and anticipation emanating from the three of us.

Another time, in Santa Fe, I was driving down Cerillos Road which is not always the happiest road due to traffic congestion. It was almost dusk and the sun was casting an orange glow on to the Sangre de Cristo mountains. I noticed that and felt a jolt of joy. "I get to live here and witness this!" is what went through my mind. There were many occasions in Santa Fe where the very landscape made me feel blessed to be a part of it. And, like Dr. Holmes wrote, it often happened when least expected. I feel this same way at the edge of an ocean, or in the presence of the Grand Canyon, or in a gathering of good friends. I often feel this way when I am in the company of fellow Unity people.

Thank you, Dr. Holmes, for writing words of wisdom and sharing them and reminding me that sacred spaces and sacred times will manifest even when I'm not paying attention.

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**First Unity's Music Director, Dr. Steve Schenkel**, has arranged for a variety of



renowned guest musicians, singers, and groups to be with us for Sunday Services during the months of **November** and **December**. All are truly welcome, and we hope you will join us in the sanctuary or online as we seek together to know God, unfold spiritually, and understand, love, and align with Spirit's Laws of Being.

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## First Unity Church Presents Its Outstanding Music Calendar for November 2023

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### November 5 Brian Clark, vocals and guitar.



**Brian Clarke** is perhaps the most beloved New Thought musician in St. Louis. He is most recently the recipient of the St. Louis Magazine A-List Award as Best Vocalist and Musician.

Brian has toured the U.S. many times as a bassist and vocalist with Kinky Friedman and Billy Swan. He has played with Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker, and many other well-known artists. As a solo performer, Brian has opened shows for The Little River Band, Poco, Leon Russell, David Crosby, The Outlaws, Tom Chapin, Donovan, and many others.

Currently, Brian continues to confidently share the skills born from his tremendous experience. His stage presence is unique, spontaneous, fresh, alive, and of the moment. He connects with you. Brian works to see that you get exactly what he intends for you to have a great time, every time!

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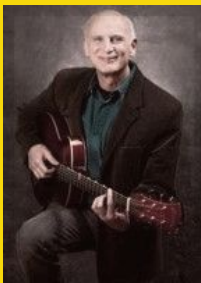
### November 12 Samuel Huddleston, vocals and Steve Schenkel, guitar.



**Samuel Huddleston, vocals.** Samuel presents a decades-spanning collection of some of the best Jazz and R&B songs ever by Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Al Jarreau and many others. Samuel weaves a tapestry of music sure to engage your heart and tickle your ear.

2008 Newsome Award Nominee for Male Vocalist of the Year for "God Has Smiled on Me"; Ranked amongst the top

5 vocalists in the World for Singer Universe April 2009 for "God Has Smiled on Me" 2009 Just Plain Folk Music Award Nominee in the Urban Gospel Category for "Nobody but Jesus", all from his music project entitled "Don't Worry".



**Steve Schenkel, guitar.** Steve is the guitarist and orchestra manager for the Fox Theater, guitarist for the Muny Opera and the St. Louis Symphony, and a freelance jazz musician.

Steve has a Ph.D. in Music from Washington University and a Master's Degree in Religious Studies from Webster University where he has served as an Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies. Steve now serves as the Music Director for First Unity Church of St. Louis.

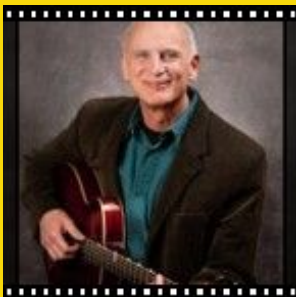
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### November 19 Joanna Serenko, vocals and Steve Schenkel, guitar.

**Joanna Serenko, vocals.** Saint Louisan since 2010, Joanna has been exploring her outlets for pursuing her passion from a young age. She has been involved in Jazz U, Sofar Sounds performances, won first place in St. Louis Teen Talent Competition, and in February 2020, she



wowed all four judges during the season premiere of NBC's "The Voice." About her experience singing on national television, Joanna says, "This show has given me a whole new confidence. It's taught me that I could make it in the music industry." Her most recent release, "*Best of Me*", is available on all major streaming services.

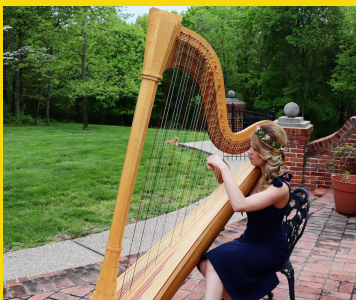


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### November 26 Colleen Stumbo, harp.



**Colleen Stumbo, harp.** Colleen began playing violin at age 8 and began playing piano and guitar in high school. Colleen fell in love with the harp while studying at St. Louis Community College for an Associate's degree in Music. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Music Therapy from Maryville University, and is currently a Board-Certified Music Therapist (MT-BC) working in hospice. She completed her Masters in Music at Webster University in Harp Performance in 2021. She is the principal harpist of the St. Louis Philharmonic, and has played with the St.

Louis Symphony Orchestra, Winter Opera St. Louis, Union Avenue Opera, St. Louis Bach Society, St. Louis Wind Symphony, Alton Symphony Orchestra, Town and Country Symphony Orchestra, the Gateway Festival Orchestra, and more. Colleen is classically trained but also loves to play nontraditional music and enjoys making custom arrangements for her clients.

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## First Unity Church Presents Its Outstanding Music Calendar for December 2023

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### December 3 Brian Clarke, vocals and guitar.



**Brian Clarke** is perhaps the most beloved New Thought musician in St. Louis. He most recently received the St. Louis Magazine A-List Award as Best Vocalist and Musician.

Brian has toured the U.S. many times as a bassist and vocalist with Kinky Friedman and Billy Swan. He has played with Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker, and many other well-known artists. Brian has opened shows for The Little River Band, Poco, Leon Russell, David Crosby, The Outlaws, Tom Chapin, Donovan, and many others as a solo performer.

Brian continues to confidently share the skills born from his tremendous experience. His stage presence is unique, spontaneous, fresh, alive, and of the moment. He connects with you. Brian works to see that you get precisely what he intends for you to have a great time every time!

## December 10 Carolbeth True, piano.



**Carolbeth True, jazz pianist.** Carolbeth is well-known in the area as a performer and music educator. She is an adjunct music faculty member at Webster University and also has an extensive private piano studio. Carolbeth performs with Two Times True with her son Dave on drums; the Carolbeth Trio; the Oikos Ensemble; Wind of the Spirit Praise Band, and is an original cast member of The Jazz Story, the first educational program presented by The Sheldon. Her trio enjoyed extended runs at both the Adam's Mark Hotel and Jazz at the Bistro.

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## December 17 and December 24 Mary Keller, vocals and piano.



**Merry Keller, vocals and piano.** Merry brings a professional choral background and extensive performing experience to her singing and teaching career.

She continued with graduate studies in vocal performance, working with Stella Conway, professor of voice at West Chester. Merry Keller continues her vocal studies with Chris Armistead at Washington University in St. Louis and has collaborated with local pianists Neal Richardson, Ron Bryant, and Martha Shaffer.

Mary Keller has been active in the St. Louis' cabaret scene, presenting a holiday show at Gaslight Theater in December 2008. She premiered her original show, *Love in Four Seasons*, at The Sheldon Concert Hall in October 2009. *A Love in Four Seasons* CD has been released that includes twelve numbers from the show. Other solo shows include *Songs of the Silver Screen* at The Sheldon and *Wade In the Water* at The Chapel in St. Louis.

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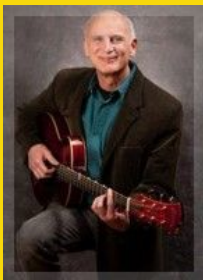
## December 31 Scott Alberici, clarinet and Steve Schenkel, guitar.



**Scott Alberici, clarinet.** Scott is one of America's finest clarinet virtuosos. Known for his superbly rich and warm tone, lyrical phrasing, and command of the American songbook, Mr. Alberici has developed a personal style that is instantly recognizable. His rare ability to capture the moment with the subtlety of expression mixed with brilliant and melodic improvisations will keep the listener on the

edge of their seat from the drop of the downbeat to the end of the performance.

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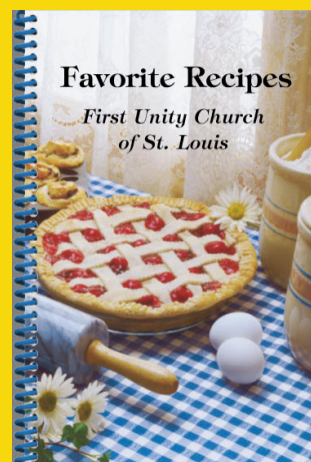
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### *COOKBOOKS ARE NOW ON SALE!!!*

Stop by the First Unity Bookstore to purchase your cookbook!

For only **\$15.00** each, our cookbook will make wonderful Christmas gifts!

*Favorite Recipes* cookbook features 300 recipes and will make a great addition to your cookbook collection.



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### **Poinsettias**



The cost is \$9 for each poinsettia and can be purchased in honor or memory of a loved one.

Our church will be taking orders from Nov 5 - Dec 10.

You can call the church at 314.845.8540 to place your order, mail in your check, or pay by check at the church. All checks are made out to **First Unity Church of St. Louis**.



### *All-Christmas Concert Presented by Route 66 Jazz Orchestra*

Route 66 Jazz Orchestra will perform at First Unity Church of St. Louis on December 8, 2023. The concert starts at 7:30 pm. Payment at the door is \$15.00 per person. Looking forward to seeing you at the concert!"

## Thanksgiving Service

**Unity Spiritual Center** is hosting the All-Unity Thanksgiving Service this year! The service will be held on Wednesday, November 22, 2023, at 7:00 pm.

All area Unity churches are invited to attend, and we hope you will invite your family and friends to join us as well.

Unity Spiritual Center is located at 700 West Clay Street, Collinsville, IL 62234



## Decorations for Christmas

Please join us for the annual Christmas decorating event on November 25, 2023, beginning at 10:00 am. All elves are welcome. Stay for pizza afterward.

Our Church decorations will be dismantled on December 30, 2023, starting at 10:00 am.

All helping hands will be appreciated.

## Christmas Goodies Bake Sale

Sunday, December 17, 2023

We will be having our traditional Christmas Bake Sale.

You can donate your favorite Christmas Goody and shop for others' goodies to take home with you for your Christmas gatherings.

All our baked goodies will be sold on a Love Offering basis. There won't be a sign-up for the baked goods; just joyously bring them to the church.



\* If you need additional information e-mail Hope at [hope\\_dodson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hope_dodson@yahoo.co.uk) or Ruth at [rrrrj2006@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rrrrj2006@sbcglobal.net)

## Christmas Luncheon with Santa



Sunday, December 17, 2023



Immediately following our Sunday Service, we will have our Christmas Luncheon downstairs in the Community Room.

The church will provide sandwiches. There will be sign-up sheets in the foyer for our community to bring side dishes, fruit, and desserts.

Family and friends are welcome; please join us.

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## Christmas Candle Lighting Service

Sunday, December 24, 2023, at 10:30 am.

As we approach the Advent season, we look forward to our Christmas Candle Lighting Service.

The Candle Lighting service is to help us bring forth and celebrate the birth of Christ consciousness within our souls.

As Charles Fillmore taught, "The bringing forth of the Christ child is not a work that is finished in Bethlehem. It is taking place in our midst every day. It is this we celebrate."



The Candle Lighting service also celebrates the "12 Living Lights" within each of us as represented in the Christmas story. These twelve lights or powers are gifts from God for the purpose of unfolding our unique, individual Christ nature. As we unfold the Christ consciousness within, we also use these powers to express the eternal activity of God in all things and in all ways.

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## Burning Bowl Ceremony

Sunday, December 31, 2023, at 10:30 am

Bridgett Nicole wrote, "One of the most courageous decisions you will ever make is to finally let go of what is hurting your heart and soul." The Burning Bowl Ceremony is a sacred and powerful ritual – a symbolic release to the fire – designed to let go of old wounds, false beliefs, and negative emotions that are blocking the flow of good in your life. Engaging in the burning bowl ritual allows you to consciously clear away the old in order to prepare for abundant joy and peace in the new year. As the fire transforms the energy in the paper surrendered to the fire, so your soul will be transformed by the spiritual power of release.

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## White Stone Ceremony

Sunday, January 7, 2024, at 10:30 am.

Following the Burning Bowl ritual, the White Stone Ceremony prepares us to create the vision of what we are called to be in the new year. In the time of Jesus, prisoners were given a new name as they were released to prove to society that all debts were paid and they were legitimately free. Through meditation, you will listen to Spirit within, and your new name will be revealed to you. You will write your new name on a white stone from Jerusalem that will be yours to keep as a reminder of what you have set the intention to be in 2023.



This powerful experience will be followed by our annual Souper Sunday luncheon.



## Souper Sunday

Sunday, January 7, 2024

Please join us in the downstairs community room after the Burning Bowl Service for "Souper" Sunday!!

We will graciously accept food items prepared for this special occasion on the day of the event.

Please sign up for soup, bread, or dessert on the signup sheets outside the sanctuary.

When you arrive, please take your prepared items to the downstairs kitchen, and our helpers will handle the rest.

See you there!

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## Feed My People

Please donate a couple of cans of soup or chili for "Feed My People."

There will be a basket upstairs in the lobby to collect your donations on the day of **Souper Sunday**.

Thank you in advance for your participation.



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## Up To The Minute News



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## Abundant and Free in 2023

**Abundant and Free in 2023 Affirmation:**

In the year 2023, we visualized prosperity and abundance for First Unity Church of St. Louis and in our personal lives. We trust God and affirm that our abundance is manifesting now.





Our goal to complete our abundance puzzle has been achieved. First Unity Church is thankful to our community for accomplishing this goal! Led by the Board of Trustees, we visualized this Initiative with an unwavering belief in the power of Abundance and Prosperity Consciousness. May it continue in the years to come.

Thank you for helping make this Initiative become a reality!

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## Ladies Night Out



November 20, 2023, at 5:30 pm.

**Chevy's Fresh Mex**  
12466 Tesson Ferry Road  
St. Louis, MO 63128

December 18, 2023, at 5:30 pm.

**Hope Dodson's Home**  
4528 Garon Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63128

Please bring a side dish or dessert and a White Elephant gift for a gift exchange.

Please contact Mary at [jtpres5111@gmail.com](mailto:jtpres5111@gmail.com) for more information.

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## Men's Night Out

November 20, 2023, at 6:00 pm.

**Hessler's Pub and Grill**  
11804 Tesson Ferry Road  
St. Louis, MO 63128

December 18, 2023, at 6:00 pm.

**Bill Gianino's Restaurant**  
4571 Chestnut Park Plaza #3135  
St. Louis, MO 63129

Please contact Roy at [fisherofbass@gmail.com](mailto:fisherofbass@gmail.com) for more information.

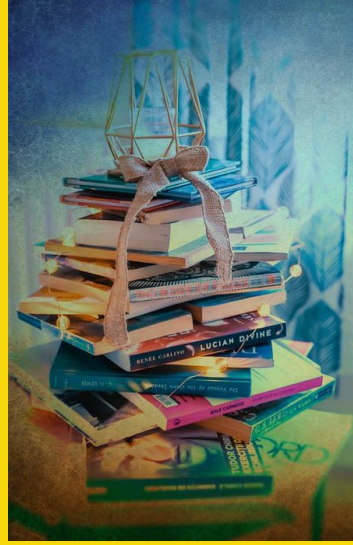


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## Book Club

Join the  
First Unity  
Book Club  
meeting  
on the  
second  
Tuesday





of the  
month  
from  
2 pm - 4  
pm.  
Everyone  
is  
welcome.  
We are  
looking  
forward to  
seeing  
you!

The book  
club will be  
meeting at:

**Miss Sheri's Cafeteria**  
**5406 Southfield Center**  
**St. Louis, MO 63123**

**Future books:**

**November 14, 2023** - *Someday, Maybe* -  
Onyi Nwabineli

**December 12, 2023** - *Now Is Not the  
Time to Panic* - Kevin Wilson

**January 9, 2024** - *Remarkably Bright  
Creatures* - Shelby Van Pelt

**February 24, 2024** - *The Magnificent  
Lives of Marjorie Post* - Allison Pataki

**March 13, 2024** - *The Personal Librarian*  
- Marie Benedict, Victoria Christopher  
Murray

For further information, please e-mail  
Carol at [cabullock48@yahoo.com](mailto:cabullock48@yahoo.com)

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For more information on our church activities: Check our website, [unitystl.org](http://unitystl.org) or  
call 314-845-8540.

[Click Button to Donate](#)

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In oneness  
of Spirit,  
we celebrate  
a world  
awakened  
to infinite  
possibilities



We are a vibrant,  
inclusive Spiritual  
community  
enriching lives  
through  
positive prayer,  
education, and service

## One of our core values for First Unity Church is: **ACCEPTANCE**

Practicing Jesus' teaching of love and understanding, we unconditionally honor the **Divine Essence** of each person.

### COMMUNITY BEHAVIORS

- We rejoice in the individuality of each person and the richness this diversity brings to our spiritual community
- As an inclusive community, we prayerfully support and consciously recognize the sacred worth of all people
- We celebrate life together knowing that we are all made in the image and likeness of the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God

### INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS

- I practice self-acceptance and monitor self-talk to ensure I am saying only affirming, loving Truths to myself
- I challenge myself to reach out to others who appear different from me
- I listen mindfully and extend appreciation for others' ideas and opinions

## *Christmas Humor*



### Classroom Humor

Teacher: "Why do we have a Thanksgiving holiday?"

Student: "So we know when to start Christmas shopping!"

### Christmas Dinner

A 4-year-old boy who was asked to give thanks before Christmas dinner. The family members bowed their heads in expectation.

He began his prayer, thanking God for all his friends, and naming them individually. Then he thanked God for Mommy, Daddy, brother, sister, Grandma, Grandpa, and all his aunts

and uncles. Next, he began to thank God for the food. He gave thanks for the turkey, the dressing, the fruit salad, the cranberry sauce, the pies, the cakes, and even the Cool Whip.

Then he paused, and everyone waited - and waited. After a long silence, the young fellow looked up at his mother and asked, "If I thank God for the broccoli, won't he know I'm lying?"

### Harry's Christmas Wish

It was the Sunday after Christmas at St Peter and St Paul's Church in Borden, Kent, England. Father John was looking at the nativity scene prior to packing away the figures when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the scene.

Immediately, Father John turned towards the vicarage in order to call the police. But as he was about to do so, he saw little Harry with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus. Father John walked up to Harry and said, 'Well, Harry, where did you get the little infant?'

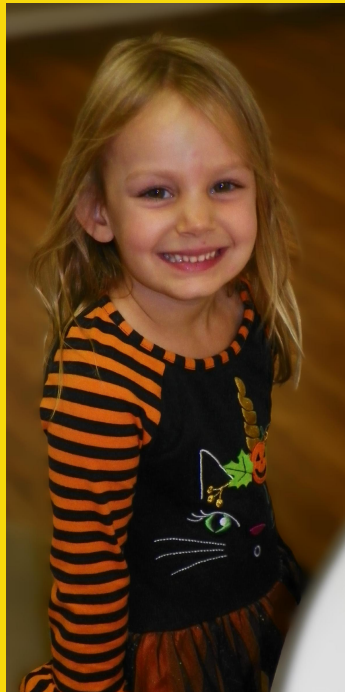
Harry replied honestly, 'I took him from the church, Father John.' 'And why did you take him?' With a sheepish smile, Harry said, 'Well, about a week before Christmas, I prayed to little Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it.'





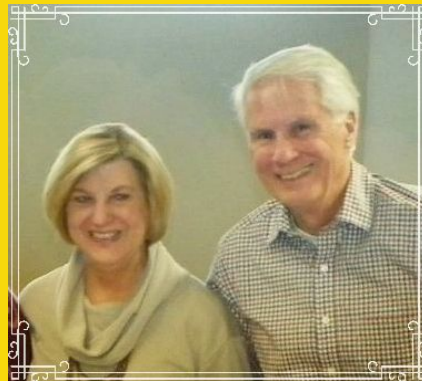
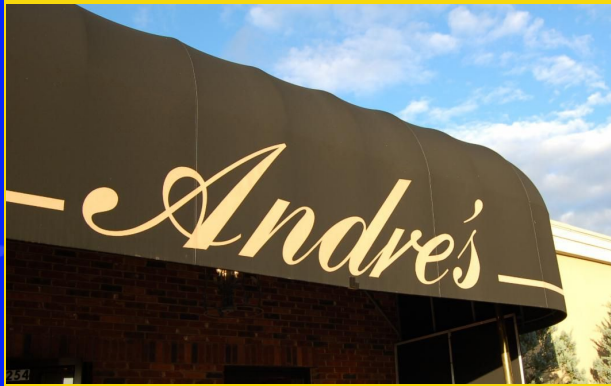


## Youth Ed Enjoys Halloween Fun





## Murder Mystery Dinner Theater








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**Minister:** Jan Mourning  
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**Website:** [unitystl.org](http://unitystl.org)  
**SilentUnity** prayer support  
 1.800.NOW PRAY (669.7729)  
**be.unity.org** is a [free mobile download](http://be.unity.org)