

## Services

### Sunday Services

10:30 am

*Streamed on Facebook Live*

**December 6**

*“Wait”*

**December 13**

*“Not Yet”*

**December 20**

*“No, Not Yet”*

**December 24**

*“Now”*

5:00 pm

*Christmas Eve Service*

**December 27**

**Holiday Break**

*Check the Grapevine this week for a list of links to online UU worship services*

***Our worship services during December will be an extended invitation into the spiritual practice of waiting.***

***Join all services on Facebook Live at 10:30 Sunday mornings (and 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve) or later on YouTube.***

# MERE LYS

## December 2020 Newsletter

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

### A View From the Hill

As I write the first Sunday of Advent is two days away. The sun is shining. I see great expanses of greenish grass under bare trees through the study window. Hundreds of thousands of people have morphed Black Friday into Cyber Monday-the-Prequel, and thousands are making strategic mall forays in an attempt to shop their way out of the discomfort and desperation of the holiday season now officially begun.

Quite frankly none of what I describe here feels right. Advent always follows immediately on the heels of Thanksgiving (in the US), but how can we even begin to think of another COVID holiday when so many are still suffering the isolating and depression deepening effects of yesterday's socially distanced meal. The weather is too fair for late November. And what are those in-person shoppers thinking!! A preventable virus picked up in a crowded store will devastate Christmas beyond the loneliness of a Thanksgiving without extended family. And the on-line shoppers, too, spending so freely in the midst of economic uncertainty.

Yet, while I might wonder what they are thinking, I know what they are feeling: deep and aching longing for connection, reconciliation, joy. The trouble is, buying never really fills those holes in the heart, not sustainably. The second trouble is, the time-proven, tradition-honored ways of sating our longings for connection, reconciliation and joy are dangerous this year. No parties. No gatherings of ordinarily far-flung kin and friends festooned with hugs and kisses. No concerts. No church services. At least none of it in real time, in real space. The third trouble is, not allowing those longings to have their say in us, not honoring the deep ache, only inflames them or drives them into stealth mode to attack us in unexpected ways and at inconvenient times. And the fourth trouble is, some of us are finding joy and connection and maybe even reconciliation in smaller gatherings, in music we anticipate year after year even if it isn't live this time, even if we're singing alone, in being able to exchange the gift of not endangering one another and discovering, in the process, that our love is strong enough to bear the physical separation—some of us, but not all of us; that's the rub.

I could go on, but you can add your own fifth, sixth, tenth trouble to the list. Instead I'll close with messages of hope, slightly adapted, that still allow space for the ache, the loneliness, the longing:

From Roy D. Phillips: if you can't be the star this year, be the night sky.

From Laurel Hallman: [even this year] it isn't dark because it is Christmas; it's Christmas because it is dark.

From Eleanor Farjean: make your house [and heart] fair as you are able.

Not the fairest they have ever been. Not as fair as in ordinary times. Not as fair as “7 Ways to Make Zoom Holidays Festive.” Rather, simply as fair/

joyful/merry/holy as you are able, in this year when our greatest challenge and our greatest gifts are survival.

May there be blessings for you in this Advent/Christmas season, despite it all.

—*Lisa*

### **Sunday Services**

Our worship services during December will be an extended invitation into the spiritual practice of waiting.

Join all services on Facebook Live at 10:30 Sunday mornings (and 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve) or later on YouTube.

### **Cyber Cider and Cookies**

As noted on the first page of this newsletter, our Christmas Eve service will be virtual, [Live on Facebook](#) from the parsonage, at 5:00 p.m. A few minutes after the benediction, after my techmeister does what's necessary, we'll gather on [Zoom](#) for an hour or so of casual conversation. Drop in to say Merry Christmas or stay for the whole time to catch up with one another. You'll have to provide your own mulled wine, cider, coffee, cocoa, and treats. We'll all provide the cheer and the love.

### **Wednesday Zoom Meetings**

**December 2 and 16.** Every other Wednesday we'll gather on Zoom at 7:00 p.m. for a chalice lighting and general conversation. It's not the same as coffee hour or potluck, but it is as close as we are going to get for the time being, and it really does strengthen connections we've all been missing. Please commit to joining in. Clicking on the link sent in Grapevines, on your smart phone or tablet will connect you.

### **News from the Board**

Most of our discussion at the November board meeting dealt with concerns for in-person attendance at church and how to plan for the Christmas season. As you already know from Grapevines, the concern for rise in Covid cases demands our vigilance and our solidarity with efforts to keep our health care workers and each other out of harm's way. We are in this for the long haul. The availability of vaccines will be encouraging but distribution to the general public is likely many

### ***A Note From the Treasurer*** **October Income and Expenses**

<b>Income:</b>	\$ 4,562.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	\$12,806.00

*Income and expenses presented at the last board meeting. Income does not include memorials and gifts.*

months away. Keep safe. Keep in touch with your church friends by phone or notes or email. Let Jeanie or Lisa know if you have needs that aren't being met that we can help with. For now, Facebook Live, You-tube and zoom check ins are our best options for bringing Nora Church to you. For myself, I've grown used to virtual social contact. Lisa's last Sunday's service was comforting for its traditional service elements listening to her sermon and Sally's music almost felt "normal"!

Another issue of concern is our shrinking checking account. At the time of our meeting, all bills were paid. That's the good news. Our checking account balance was \$7,000. Thank you to all who have continued your pledges and church contributions even though we are not together in person. Julie and Lisa have completed paperwork for forgiveness of the PPP loan which we received last May. We expect forgiveness as the main stipulation for the loan was that salaries were not negatively impacted due to the pandemic.

Grounds work included putting up the snow fence, replacing the bat house, and Darrell has rebuilt and painted the picnic tables.

The board will be having a zoom meeting December 7 with Rev. Phil Lund, staff at Mid-America Region and our liaison, about the steps forward in finding part-time ministry for 2021-2022.

Hoping your holiday season has bright surprises, good cheer, charity abounding, live well. Merry Christmas!

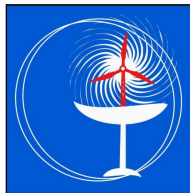
Jeanie

### **Board Meeting**

The next Board meeting is Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup> on Zoom. We will be joined by Rev. Phil Lund, staff at Mid-America Region and our liaison, about the steps forward in finding part-time ministry for 2021-2022.

### **Pastor Lisa's Schedule**

Pastor Lisa has Mondays off.  
Friday is sermon writing day.  
She can be reached on her cell  
when not in the office:  
507-766-7822.



### **Lisa at Large**

My main activity at large in December comes early in the month. [Hope 2.0: a night of stories and music](#) premieres on December 3 at 7:00 at [www.numashaus.org](http://www.numashaus.org). I hope you'll attend. This is our opportunity to resume our financial support of NUMAS Haus even during this time when we aren't in church to dedicate our second Sunday loose offering to this organization we've been supporting since its inception.

### **Inclement Weather**

In case of Sunday morning inclement weather, the decision to cancel church service will be made no later than 8:00 a.m. Announcements will be made via Grapevine email, posting on the Nora website and Facebook page, and a cancellation notice will be sent to KNUJ and KTOE. When church is not cancelled, you are responsible for your own safety. We love to see everyone at church but we would rather know everyone is safe. Please do not drive to church when road conditions, high winds or frigid temperature feel *unsafe to you*. We'll see you the next Sunday, or the next month or in April!!

Don't forget that services are streaming on Facebook Live and Program Committee services are on Zoom!

### **Braver/Wiser: Allowing Chaos**

*"When you reach out, I am here hell or high water / This nest is never going away / My mission is to keep the light in your eyes ablaze."*

—Alanis Morissette, "[Ablaze](#)"

"Mama, can I tell you something?"

I wish I could answer yes. I would shine motherly grace upon my five-year-old son and answer, "Yes, of course. Always tell me something."

In better days, I left for work to be with my congregation, listening to NPR on my commute without screaming. Returning home, I could answer wholeheartedly, "Yes. Please. Tell me something."

These are not better days. Now he doesn't have my attention. No one does.

Not my wonderful congregation;

Not God, who requires nothing but attention;

Not my steadfast spouse;

Not my parents, who I might never see again (how could this be true?);

Not my friends, who are my joy;

Not my body, when I remember what's attached to my frantic head.

Nothing has my full attention anymore, so my answer is a clipped and resentful, "No. Do not tell me something."

This is confusing for my twins because I am in front of their faces, more present than ever, but less available than ever. Unreachable across an ocean of distance no greater than the kitchen. Present in body, but missing in action.

My sons have regressed. Where they once followed classroom rituals, they no longer wish to regulate their voices; they sprint everywhere. They'll scream out "HATE!," their rebellious utterance of that taboo word echoing unmanageable frustration when their mom is right here, yet unreachable.

This was the pandemic spring they learned to ride their bikes without training wheels. This was the pandemic summer they learned to swim, daring each other to jump off the diving board until they did.

This was the pandemic summer they picked peach-

### **Notes from the Nora Office...**

**Mere Lys Newsletter content due  
the 20th of each month**

**Since there will be no printed orders of service, please send announcements for Grapevines via email, or pass along to Rev. Lisa for me.**

Please send content of any kind, for the newsletter and more, to the Nora email.

*Brooke Knisley, Office Assistant  
Working from home and in the office Tuesday*

es and figs from neighbors' yards, the fall they discovered family sing-alongs and kitchen dance parties.

Pandemic parenting five-year-olds is relentlessly exhausting, and sheer joy. Ministering a congregation has never felt more chaotic, nor has the call to ministry ever felt more clear.

As we enter a new phase of pandemic, I may allow the chaos to seep through the cracks between work and home that I've held together with play-dough and chewing gum. So next time my boy asks, "Mama, can I tell you something?" and there's a Zoom screen of congregants peering back at me, awaiting wisdom, I might just turn my face away from them and answer, "Yes. Tell me," while they all watch me be the minister I am.

### *Prayer*

Holy Mystery, we seek blessed assurance through pandemic chaos, relentless loss, and unimaginable stress. Show us the way of grace as a holy symbiosis, an offering we receive and give to one another in times of separateness. Lead us to deeper wells of grace than we have known, until we gather together all our divided selves into realness and wholeness. Amen.

*By Taryn Strauss*

*November 18, 2020—Braver/Wiser*



### *An Old Man's Winter Night*

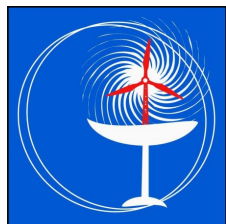
*Robert Frost - 1874-1963*

All out-of-doors looked darkly in at him  
Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars  
That gathers on the pane in empty rooms  
What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze  
Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand  
What kept him from remembering what it was  
That brought him to that creaking room was age  
He stood with barrels round him—at a loss  
And having scared the cellar under him  
In clomping there, he scared it once again  
In clomping off;—and scared the outer night  
Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar  
Of trees and crack of branches, common things  
But nothing so like beating on a box  
A light he was to no one but himself  
Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what  
A quiet light, and then not even that  
He consigned to the moon—such as she was  
So late-arising—to the broken moon  
As better than the sun in any case  
For such a charge, his snow upon the roof  
His icicles along the wall to keep;  
And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt  
Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted  
And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept  
One aged man—one man—can't keep a house  
A farm, a countryside, or if he can  
It's thus he does it of a winter night



#### **To ♥ Keep In Touch**

If you know of anyone needing our assistance or attention, please call one of the **Caring Committee** members: Georgine Tepley: 359-3060 (weekdays after 5 pm), Diane Becken: 354-3103, Carol Chambard: 354-2242



## **Nora Unitarian Universalist Church**

12333 155th Avenue, Hanska, Minnesota 56041

Phone: 507.439.6240

Email: [norachurch@sleepyeyetel.net](mailto:norachurch@sleepyeyetel.net) Website: [www.norauchurch.org](http://www.norauchurch.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NoraChurchUU](http://www.facebook.com/NoraChurchUU)