

Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula

740 E. Main Street, Santa Paula, CA 93060 (805) 525-4647

uucspoffice@gmail.com website: uucsp.org

JANUARY SERVICES, SUNDAYS AT 10:30 AM



January Theme: Practicing Resistance

Welcome, all who are restless for a world renewed. We come carried by ancestors who refused the silence of despair and dared to sing a new song. Their courage whispers through us still. Today, we resist by showing up—together. We resist by keeping faith with what is not yet. Our gathering is itself an act of sacred dissent, calling us to rise and unite as co-creators of a freer tomorrow.

Sunday, January 4 The Burning Bowl John Nichols and Jerry Gray

The Burning Bowl is an annual end-of-year ceremony we perform each January. We will learn what John has been thinking of late and will talk about the meaning of ritual and the history of the Burning Bowl ceremony. We will then collectively perform the ritual. It is a cleansing and healing ceremony to get the New Year started off right.

January 11 *Practicing Resistance: Refusing Forgetfulness* Carolyn Bjerke and Alice Henderson

Resistance does not always look like marching or shouting. Sometimes it looks like remembering what others would prefer we forget.

This service explores resistance as a practice of memory, remembering our values, our histories, and our shared responsibility to one another. Drawing on the legacy of the Edict of Torda (1568) and Unitarian Universalism's long commitment to freedom of conscience, we reflect on how truth-telling and historical honesty help us resist denial and erasure.

January 18 *Practicing Resistance: Community, Not Heroes* Carolyn Bjerke and Ruth Ricards

We often tell stories of resistance that center singular heroes. But lasting change is almost always made by communities, imperfect, interdependent, and persistent.

On World Religion Day and the weekend honoring Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., this service resists the temptation to sanitize King's legacy or reduce justice work to individual bravery. Instead, we honor the collective labor, shared risk, and moral imagination required to build beloved community across difference.

January 25 *Practicing Resistance: Protecting What Sustains Us* Carolyn Bjerke and Ellen Deeb

Urgency tells us there is no time to rest. Despair tells us joy is frivolous. But both are powerful tools of harm. This service explores resistance as the protection of what keeps us human: rest, joy, tenderness, and attention to our own limits. Drawing from spiritual traditions that insist we are more than what we produce or endure, we reflect on how exhaustion dulls our moral clarity—and how care restores it.

The mission of the Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula
is to practice inclusiveness, seek justice and foster spirituality.

Message from the Minister

January: Practicing Resistance, the Long Way Around

January has a way of asking a lot of us.

The calendar flips. The world keeps pressing. And suddenly we're told it's time to be clear, motivated, and ready, to fix, to act, to commit, to know what comes next. But many of us enter January not energized, but tired. Not certain but carrying questions.

So, this month, instead of asking "what should we do?", we're beginning with a gentler question:

What helps us keep going when the road ahead is long?

That question has been asked before, in stories as well as in real life. And one clear answer comes from a beloved book.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the fate of the world doesn't rest with the strongest warriors or the most confident leaders. It rests, improbably, with hobbits, ordinary people who love meals, gardens, songs, and home.

One of them, Samwise Gamgee, is not powerful or ambitious. He doesn't seek adventure or glory. What he does, again and again, is stay. He walks beside Frodo when the road is long, tends the small necessities, remembers beauty when hope feels thin, and carries his friend when the burden becomes too heavy to bear alone.

Tolkien reminds us that resistance is rarely one dramatic act. More often, it's practiced quietly: through companionship, steadiness, and the decision to take the next step, even when the horizon feels unclear.

That image might help frame how we're moving through January.

Rather than treating the new year as a sprint or a "fresh start" that demands instant clarity and energy, this may be a time to ground ourselves in practices that can last. January's theme, Practicing Resistance, invites us to think less about intensity and more about sustainability, about what helps us remain human, connected, and present when the work ahead is long.

January offers a few steady touchstones, including ways to gather midweek when the world, and the week, can feel heavy.

We'll continue our First Wednesday meditation with Vibay Weisbecker, creating space for reflection and grounding in the middle of the week. This will be in person and online.

And on Wednesday, January 21, we'll hold a Taizé-style meditative service, an evening of simple singing, readings, silence, and candlelight, inspired by the contemplative tradition of the Taizé community. This service isn't about learning something new or solving anything. It's about resting the nervous system, sharing quiet, and remembering that we don't carry life, or resistance, alone.

I propose that this January we don't have to have the answers. Instead, we can set a rhythm we can live with. Tend what sustains us. Walk together at a pace that allows for endurance.

Like Sam Gamgee, we're not called to do everything.

We're called to keep going, together, one faithful step at a time.

Carolyn Bjerke, Minister
Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Paula
Pronouns: She/her

Message from Board of Trustees

The Annual Meeting of the Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula will be held via Zoom at 1:00 p.m. (that's 1300 hours for you military time buffs) on January 25, 2026 - after the Sunday Service and a short break. Election of two Board trustees, one Building Preservation Fund trustee, one Committee on Congregational Life member, and next year's Nominating Committee team will occur.

In addition to these elections, we will vote to adopt our 2026 operating budget. We will hear from our Board President, and several committees will augment their written reports. Those written reports, the budget and complete agenda, along with the minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting (the "packet") will be sent via email to members after the Board of Trustees accepts the budget submitted by the Finance Committee, which should happen at the January 15 regular board meeting.

During the Zoom Annual Meeting – and we will reiterate this at the time – folks will be muted, except for the designated speaker. There is just no way to hear more than one person at a time. Our technology team will be watching for questions, nominations, raised hands and such, and there is the chat feature on Zoom. All who wish to speak will be heard.

If you are one who normally blocks their camera during services, we will need you to be visible during the meeting so that we know who is in attendance. Our bylaws require a quorum be present at any meeting of the congregation, and we will be using screen view to verify that everyone is who they seem to be. Thank you for your cooperation.

If you require a printed packet be mailed to you, please advise our Office Administrator Krystal. It should arrive by post with plenty of time for you to familiarize yourself with it. Emailed packets should arrive about a week prior to the meeting. Please make sure that the church office has your current address.

Those who submit reports for the Annual Meeting packets should all have been notified of the deadline. If you haven't already done so, please send your report in Microsoft Word or plain text format to Krystal by the first week of January. Communication is key here – any questions, please let us know as soon as possible.

We ask those who give verbal reports at the meeting to not repeat what is in their printed reports, but to make any additional comments or answer any queries from the congregation.

Thank you again for your understanding.

If you have any questions, please contact any Board member.

Mitch Stone, President

Ken Stock, Vice President

Ann Hewitt, Secretary

Jerry Gray, Treasurer

People and Doings

2026 1st QUARTER FIRST SUNDAY OFFERING



Poder Popular in Santa Paula, CA, is a vital community organization focused on empowering residents, especially agricultural workers, by providing essential resources like a food pantry (with groceries, diapers, formula), health/literacy workshops, and advocacy for better living/working conditions, operating through local partnerships and community engagement to strengthen the Santa Clara River Valley community's well-being.

SOARING HEARTS YOGA



Lisa Hammond has been leading Yoga in our parish hall since June 2015. These meetings have been on Tuesday's and Thursday's for many years.

In January 2026 the Tuesday meeting will be changing to Monday.

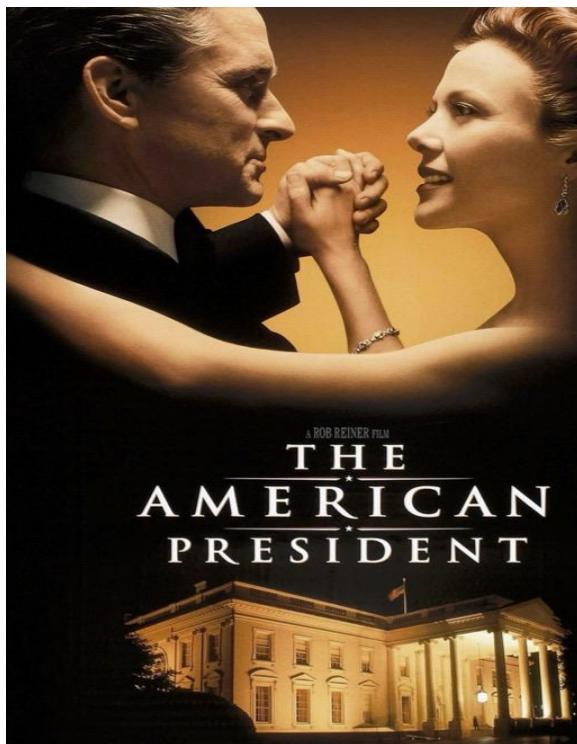
Same time, same place, Monday instead of Tuesday.

Thursday's will continue as usual.

Bring your own mats and props.

Please contact Lisa Hammond at 831-801-2276 or soaringheartsyoga@gmail.com for more information.

SANTA PAULA CINEMA SOCIETY



From the Watergate era of "All the President's Men," we fast-forward two decades to a very different sort of White House-based film — "The American President" (1995), directed by Rob Reiner and written by Aaron Sorkin.

Michael Douglas supplies one of his most charming performances in this romantic comedy as President Andrew Shepherd, a widowed commander-in-chief who sees his approval ratings take a nose dive when he initiates a romance with lobbyist Sydney Ellen Wade (Annette Bening). Remember when something like that mattered?

Sorkin's signature "walk-and-talk" screenplay is sharp, and the film succeeds in humanizing Shepherd through mundanities, such as a world leader trying to figure out how to order flowers without a credit card. In a double-dose of nostalgia from our current perspective, the film (like its director) is idealistic without apology — culminating in a feel-good closing speech that could have been lifted straight out of a Frank Capra film of the 1940s.

Politics was probably never as civil as it is depicted here by Reiner and Sorkin (or by Capra, for that matter). Yet it's fascinating to consider that at one time audiences could be sold on the idea of it being possible. Can we still today? We'll find out. Also featuring Martin Sheen and Michael J. Fox.

FRIDAY JANUARY 9, 2026
SANTA PAULA CINEMA SOCIETY

Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula • 740 E. Main Street • 7PM • Free! • Enter Side Door

People and Doings

SIP AND CHECK IN TUESDAY, JANUARY 13 AT 4 PM ON ZOOM

Each month, on the second Tuesday, Sharon Kufeldt graciously offers members of the congregation an opportunity to connect with one another on Zoom. This unstructured segment of time (between 4 and 5 p.m.) gives those who do check in, whether regularly or occasionally, a chance to share. Oftentimes one doesn't wish to express anything directly, yet it is another avenue for fellowship with one another.



“SPIRIT TALK” (Book and Discussion Group)

Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 3:30 to 5:00 P.M., Zoom

In “Spirit Talk” our goal is to ponder and wonder over the age-old questions and mysteries of life, death and life in--between life (if it exists). We are not trying to convince anyone to believe in a particular belief system, but to explore what can be gleaned from science, personal experience and ancient knowledge. We are not missionaries, but seekers of knowledge to enhance our personal growth. Our first selection is **Journey of Souls, Case Studies of Life Between Life**, by Michael Newton, PHD.

“Now considered a classic in the field, this remarkable book was the first to fully explore the mystery of life between lives. Journey of Souls presents the first-hand accounts of twenty-nine people placed in a “superconscious” state of awareness using Dr. Michael Newton’s groundbreaking techniques. This unique approach allows Dr. Newton to reach his subjects’ hidden memories of life in the spirit world after physical death. While in deep hypnosis, the subjects movingly describe what happened to them between lives. They reveal graphic details about what the spirit world is really like, where we go and what we do as souls, and why we come back in certain bodies. Through the extraordinary stories in this book, you will learn the specifics about:--How it feels to die--What you see and feel right after death--When and where you learn to recognize soul mates on earth--Different levels of soul: beginning, intermediate, and advanced--What happens to “disturbed” souls--The purpose of life and manifestation of a “creator”. (Excerpt taken from Hoopla)

Everyone who reads the book is invited and welcomed. Talk to Karen, Sharon or Margaret for more information

BOARD OF TRUSTEES will meet on Thursday, January 15 at 6:30 pm in the Parish Hall.

WORSHIP TEAM will meet on Tuesday, January 20 at 3:00 pm in the Parish Hall.

SOCIAL CONCERN'S ACTION COMMITTEE

SCAC is starting the year off at our monthly meeting January 21st on zoom. We always meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. We commit to staying informed about current events (especially those involving undocumented & vulnerable people) in Ventura County. We stand in support of social justice for all!

MARY A. LIVERMORE SOCIETY

Mary Livermore, was an empowered American journalist, abolitionist, & advocate of women's rights. We are happy to celebrate her on the 4th Thursday of each month at our in-person meeting in Parish Hall. We are starting 2026 off with a celebratory; lunch at Chapala Restaurant on January 22nd at 11:00 am. We will reserve a table & ask everyone attending to please RSVP as soon as possible so that we have an accurate headcount. Contact Constancia who will be very happy to hear from you! (constancia47@gmail.com

People and Doings

JUST FOR FUN



New Year's traditions worldwide focus on luck, prosperity, and fresh starts, involving symbolic foods like 12 grapes (Spain) or black-eyed peas (U.S. South), specific colors (white in Brazil for peace, red/yellow underwear for love/money in Latin America), noisemakers (pots/pans), cleaning rituals (sweeping out the old, not washing laundry), and midnight rituals like kissing ("Auld Lang Syne") or tossing things (dishes in Denmark, water in Puerto Rico) to banish bad luck and welcome good fortune for the year ahead.

Food & Drink

- **12 Grapes:** Eat one for each chime at midnight for luck in each month (Spain, Latin America).
- **Hoppin' John:** Black-eyed peas and rice for prosperity (U.S. South).
- **Round Foods:** Symbolize coins and abundance (e.g., lentils in Italy, pomegranates in Greece).
- **Champagne/Cider:** Toasting at midnight for celebration.

Rituals & Superstitions

- **Kiss at Midnight:** Ensures love in the new year (Europe, U.S.).
- **Clean House:** Sweep out the old year, but avoid heavy cleaning on New Year's Day to not sweep out luck.
- **Open Doors/Windows:** Let out the old year and welcome the new (Philippines).
- **Fireworks & Noisemakers:** Bang pots, pans, or light fireworks to scare away evil spirits.
- **Wear Specific Colors:** White for peace (Brazil) or red/yellow underwear for love/money (Latin America).

Actions for the Future

- **Carry an Empty Suitcase:** For a year of travel (Colombia, Mexico).
- **Make Resolutions:** A tradition dating back to Babylonians.
- **First Footing (Scotland):** The first person to cross the threshold after midnight brings luck (ideally a dark-haired man with symbolic gifts).

Unique Traditions

- **Drop Ice Cream:** In Switzerland, dropping ice cream on the floor.
- **Smash Dishes:** Throw old dishes at neighbors' doors in Denmark.
- **Ring Bells:** Japanese temples ring bells 108 times.
- **Jump into Water:** Polar plunges for a fresh start.

What are your New Year's traditions?

Many people make New Year's resolutions. Do you? I personally don't make resolutions but instead thoughtfully choose a couple of intentions.

Resolution vs. Intention highlights a shift from rigid, outcome-focused goals (resolutions) to flexible, purpose-driven principles (intentions), with resolutions often failing due to strict "all or nothing" rules, while intentions provide a compassionate compass for daily actions, focusing on *how* you want to be (e.g., healthier, calmer) rather than just *what* you'll achieve (e.g., lose weight, stop yelling). Intentions connect to deeper values, offering grace and adaptability, making them more likely to foster lasting change by guiding moment-to-moment choices rather than dictating future results.

People and Doings

DAY	DATE	TIME	EVENT/MEETING	Zoom/In-person
Thursday	1-Jan	9:30 AM	NO Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Friday	2-Jan	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	
Friday	2-Jan	9:30 AM	Finance Committee meeting	zoom
Sunday	4-Jan	10:30 AM	Worship service	both
Monday	5-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Wednesday	7-Jan	6:00 PM	Meditation with Vibay	In-person
Thursday	8-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Friday	9-Jan	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	
Friday	9-Jan	7:00 PM	Santa Paula Cinema Society	In-person
Sunday	11-Jan	10:30 AM	Worship service	both
Monday	12-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Tuesday	13-Jan	4:00 PM	Sip & Check In	zoom
Monday	15-Jan	all day	February Newsletter deadline	
Thursday	15-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Thursday	15-Jan	4:00 PM	Caring Committee meeting	In-person
Thursday	15-Jan	6:30 PM	Board of Trustees meeting	zoom
Friday	16-Jan	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	
Sunday	18-Jan	10:30 AM	Worship service	In-person
Monday	19-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Tuesday	20-Jan	3:00 PM	Worship Team Meeting	In-person
Wednesday	21-Jan	3:00 PM	Social Concerns Action Committee meeting	zoom
Thursday	22-Jan	11:00 AM	Mary A's meeting	In-person
Thursday	22-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Friday	23-Jan	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	
Sunday	25-Jan	10:30 AM	Worship service	In-person
Sunday	25-Jan	1:00 PM	ANNUAL MEETING	Zoom
Monday	26-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Thursday	29-Jan	9:30 AM	Yoga with Lisa	In-person
Friday	30-Jan	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	

THE UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN
CHURCH OF SANTA PAULA

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Office: 805-525-4647

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Sunday Worship Services at 10:30 am

Carolyn Bjerke, Minister

Board of Trustees:

Mitch Stone, President,
Ken Stock, Vice-President
Ann Hewitt, Secretary,
Jerry Gray, Treasurer
Margaret Wilaon, Member at Large

Krystal Johnson, Office Administrator

Vincent Sorisio, Church Musician

Tech Support Team:

Monika Murillo Giselle Larios

Rev. Maddie Sifantus, Minister Emerita

HOW TO CONNECT WITH UUCSP

**JOIN US SUNDAYS AT 10:30 AM IN PERSON,
ON ZOOM**

Read our newsletter which you can find at
<https://uucsp.org/newsletter/>

Contact our office if you want to be added to our Friday email and our monthly newsletter email or want to have a nametag for in person events.

office@uucsp.org

Visit our website to see more about UUCSP and see what's new at www.uucsp.org

Join our Facebook page at
www.facebook.com/uucsp

*Time Value
Dated Material*

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