

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31ST, 2021



Dear Ones,

Happy New Year!

Did you love the Christmas Eve service? *I loved it!* Thanks to every one of you who brought the magic!

This Sunday morning, Cheng Cheng (piano) plays Barnby, Johnson, Akers, and Balbastre. Other highlights: Our quartet sings Director of Music Mark David Buckles' choral setting of the fourth principle of Unitarian Universalism (We covenant to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning); Mark David (guitar) and Julie Metcalf (violin) sing Xavier Rudd's *Follow the Sun*; and we'll all sing *Morning Has Come*

A new day dawns, once more the gift is giv'n
Wonder fills this moment shared together
The light of peace here shines upon each face
May it bring faith to guide our journey home

The heart of the service is the anthem — Hannah Shanefield (soprano), Angela Yam (soprano), Daniel Rosensweig (tenor), and Andrew Stack (baritone) sing Larson's *Seasons of Love* from "Rent."

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred moments so dear
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes
How do you measure, measure a year?

How about love?
Measure in love....

Are you already singing it?!

Art Nava is our worship coordinator, celebrating 19 years since he first walked through the Great Doors of Arlington Street — our lucky day! Happy Anniversary, Art! My sermon is called Good Intentions.

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This week brought a grim new milestone to the Commonwealth: Massachusetts surpassed its highest-ever positive test results for COVID — over 15,000 cases in a single day. At its December meeting, the Prudential Committee (aka the Pru, our elected governing board) and our COVID Response Team (CRT) engaged a deeply thoughtful conversation about how to live with what we now understand to be an endemic virus (endemic meaning, essentially, that it isn't going away, at least not any time soon). Questions we raised included

- Do we continue to close the sanctuary and move from hybrid services to all-virtual services when the positivity rate reaches a certain threshold?
- Should we reopen the sanctuary for hybrid services, simply allowing people to make their own decisions about how much risk they're willing to tolerate?
- Does offering an in-person option signal that we as a congregation believe it's safe to do so, even when, clearly, there's a significant risk of infection?
- How can we continue to lift up the critical need for each of us to behave in a way that makes the world safer for those at highest risk for illness and death?

Along with the rest of the world, we're building this road as we walk on it; obviously, there are no easy answers. But Julia Simon introduced us to the idea of “circuit breakers” — a faster, targeted action to contain the spread of the omicron variant of COVID 19. Pioneered by emergency physician Jeremy Faust and epidemiologist Bill Hanage, circuit breakers are “short-term restrictions on high-risk activities, meant to disrupt and slow transmission of the virus.” This strategy would allow hospitals to care for both those with COVID and others with acute medical conditions.

What are some actions we can all take, collectively — even briefly — that will stem the tide? The examples Dr. Faust gave include limiting or eliminating indoor public dining; canceling performances; and encouraging work from home, if possible. To that, we would add attending church in person.

Dr. Faust said, “This variant is so extravagantly contagious that we can't wait around. We have to anticipate what's coming. We have an advantage. We have a population that's vaccinated. And we know that the numbers of cases today doesn't mean the same thing that it did a year ago. But unfortunately, omicron is so contagious that it will find the people who are not protected. And so we can project the kinds of hospitalizations that we'll see in a week. The idea is that if we take collective action, we can change the trend.” You can read and listen to the WBUR report [here](#).

The Pru and the CRT are taken with the concept of circuit breakers as a strategy for stewarding the health of the in-person congregation and for the Greater Boston community. For now — though I pray not for long! — we've thrown the circuit breakers and the sanctuary remains closed to in-person worship. As always, I am filled with gratitude for our extraordinary Tech team and for the power of Zoom, bringing us a vibrant, virtual service and keeping us together and closer than ever, no matter what!

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote,
And now let us believe in the new year
that is given us:
new, untouched,
full of things that have never been.

Faithfully yours, with love
Kim



His Holiness the Dalai Lama shares a laugh with his “respected elder spiritual brother and good friend,” Archbishop Desmond Tutu of blessed memory. Arch: *ipresente!*