

A Joyful Noise—Music and Unitarian Universalism  
By Jennifer L. Butz and ...

Music, creativity and expression go hand in hand with Unitarian Universalism. Some of our best known and well-loved English Christmas classics are, in fact, Unitarian in origin. How many times in the last holiday season did you find yourself humming "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear? You were, then, singing an old Unitarian tune.

Music and creative expression are important to the Unitarian Universalist belief. We sing for joy and sorrow. We sing for justice. We sing to celebrate the gathering of individuals with a passion for community and service.

Music, creativity and expression have been a cornerstone of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Miguel (UUFMSA) since its beginning 30 years ago. Each service is carefully crafted to include piano stylings that complement the essence of the day's service. The earliest UUs would listen to special music lined up by the legendary George Bell or enjoy the music of talented members on an old electric organ. By mid-1990s, the old electric organ gave up the ghost. The membership contributed to the purchase of a magnificent Bosendorfer grand piano, which continues to enrich our services every week. Over the years, the UU Fellowship has been graced by the keyboard talents of members Elena Shoemaker, Ann Riley, Elsmarie Norby, Liz Stone, Paula Peace and Marianne Koerner.

In addition to the weekly preludes, hymns and offertory selections on the piano, each week the UUs invite special musical talent that comes through this gem of a city we all call home. Jon Sievert is in charge now of lining up the range of talent as it comes to and through San Miguel de Allende. One weekend it might be a select set of young singers in town to pursue a dream of an international operatic career. The next week might feature gypsy jazz or the indigenous Mexican songs offered by Yoremem Jacobi. Another week it might be local talent such as the world-reknown jazz pianist Doug Robinson or the folk traditions of the High Desert Rangers. Still other weekends might find singers, guitarists, flautists, horn players, bell ringers, violinists, bassists, or concert duos—all performing for an appreciative and always enthusiastic audience. We make a joyful noise!