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Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the
Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley

April 2020 – Vol. 79, Issue 4

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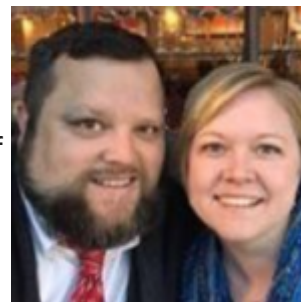
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From the Ministers

None of us, probably, could have imagined how things would be now a month ago. Our world has changed, for the moment and likely for some time into the future. As of this writing, we are sheltering in place, practicing social distancing, and trying to prevent or at least slow the spread of this novel coronavirus, Covid-19.



Friends, these are unusual, nearly unprecedented, times. Our congregation is working to stay in touch with one another, to offer what support we can, and to be there (virtually!) for each other in this time.

As part of that, we have moved as many of our offerings as possible online – worship, many of our meetings and groups, and pastoral care. Our ministerial discretionary fund is available for people who need financial support right now, and open for donations from anyone who can help support it, too. We have been working hard to stay in touch with every member household via a

phone tree, and are offering grocery delivery to some of our members who cannot get out to get their own groceries.

The worship theme this month is “Renewal” and though the options available to all of us in these days for renewal are different from more normal times, we hope you will take advantage of the spiritual resources and sustenance provided in this issue of the Beacon. There are poems, writings, and other creative endeavors from our members, shared to our members, that they might provide some support in these wild times.

We want you to know that this congregation is here for you in this time, and always. We give thanks for the adventurous spirit with which so many of you have embraced new ways of being together, and for all of the support and care you are offering one another and your neighbors. We truly are in this together!

In faith,

Christian and Kristin

Do You Need Help Getting Groceries or Meds?

As we shelter in place and go out only as needed, some of the less vulnerable among us are stepping forward to make necessary errands for those who can't or shouldn't go out. This is very generous, because in fact no one is immune to serious illness from this virus. We thank these volunteers for their loving assistance.

If you are “older” – variously defined as 60 or 65 or 70 or more – or for any other reason are especially vulnerable, PLEASE CONTACT US rather than go out yourself and risk infection. We may be able to help you connect with available delivery services. And we will shop and deliver to you in person if that is the best solution. We want to be sure everyone has the essentials to weather this difficult time.

Contact: grocerydelivery@uucb.org, or 510-356-3496 to leave a message. The outgoing message at this number may contain pertinent updates. Susan Lankford is coordinating this grocery delivery effort for UUCB.

Sunday Services in April

Theme for April: Renewal

April 5, April 12 (EASTER), April 19, April 26

Morning Worship 11–11:30 am

We will gather on [Facebook Live](#) and [YouTube](#) for a simple service of readings, music, and prayer. Make sure to have a candle handy!

Virtual Coffee Hour 11:30 am–12:30 pm

After worship we invite you to switch over to Zoom for a time to connect "face to face." The link to Virtual Coffee Hour is listed below, but we will also share it in the comments on the Facebook Live feed during worship. Use the following information to join us:

<p>Online</p> <p>https://zoom.us/j/332046821</p> <p>Meeting ID: 332 046 821</p> <p>Password: 810131</p>	<p>Telephone</p> <p>Dial</p> <p>(669) 900 6833 US</p>
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Thursday Vespers in April

April 2, April 9, April 16, April 23, April 30

7–8:30 pm

After lighting our chalice and hearing a centering reading, we will check in with one another and be together in community on Zoom! Use the following information to join us:

<p>Online</p> <p>https://zoom.us/j/690225549</p> <p>Meeting ID: 690 225 549</p> <p>Password: 251288</p>	<p>Telephone</p> <p>Dial</p> <p>(669) 900 6833</p>
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Please note that the chaplain program is on hold until further notice. We pray that they are able to maintain good health during their increased visits to those in need.

Good Neighbor for April:

The [Women's Cancer Resource Center](#) helps women with cancer improve quality of life through education, supportive services, and practical assistance.

They serve people with any form of cancer from all backgrounds, economic levels, and ethnicities. Clients include people with new diagnoses, people in remission, those living with metastatic disease, and those receiving end of life care.



Personal Theology

Sunday mornings, 9:30-10:45 am, Fireside Room

Sunday mornings, 9:30-10:45 am, Fireside Room

Your wellbeing is our top priority. Because the Shelter in Place order has been extended until at least May 3, we will not be holding our regularly scheduled meetings during the month of April.

Please stay safe!

Gloria Merrill

Personal Theology Committee

For more information contact [Anne Wardell](#) or [Gloria Merrill](#), 510-527-2681. Personal Theology Committee: Gloria Merrill, Barbara Rockhold, and Anne Wardell; Publicists: Kit Hewitt and Charles Wright; and Audio Technicians: Dwight Merrill, Mac Lingo, and Charles Wright.

Humanist Connections

Sundays, 12:30 pm, Zoom

“A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” (Fourth principle of Unitarian Universalism.)

April 5: “The coronavirus” with Anne Fitzmaurice

April 12: “Topics for May plus brief topic discussions” with Ray Westergard

April 19: “The future of the nuclear family” with Hope Carroll

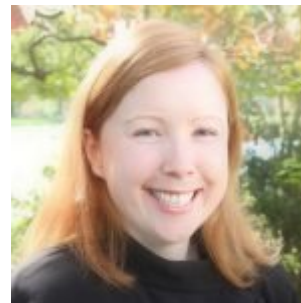
April 26: “Quilts and other hand-made items” with Diane Rusnak

Group managers: Susan Singh, Ray Westergard, Al Kueffner, Lee Lawrence, Kris Homme, Anne Fitzmaurice. Communications: Marcia Bates mjbates@ucla.edu. Format (most weeks): A 10- to 15-minute presentation followed by a moderated, timed discussion. Newcomers welcome! Co-Chairs of the group are Marcia Bates, mjbates@ucla.edu, and

Anne Fitzmaurice, buckley@lmi.net. Contact them with any questions.

Family Ministry

Catherine Boyle, Acting Director of Family Ministry



Well. This is strange.

Definitely not how I imagined April looking when we planned Easter in January. I am guessing the situation is similar for you?

I won't rehash what you already know: that there is a pandemic, that I am writing this locked in quarantine, that 2020 needs a nap, a long one. What is important to say is this: It is ok if you feel anxious. It is ok if you feel angry. It is ok if you feel sad or bored or exhausted or even if you feel every emotion the human mind creates. It is ok to not be ok, especially in the first pandemic of the century.

These emotions are there to remind you of your humanity, your empathy and your compassion, both for others and for yourself. It is ok to sit with them and recognize them. A trope of our culture is to just grin and bear it. Fake it until you make it. Smile, smile, smile – after all, smiling takes way less muscle than frowning! No, you do not have to smile your way through this and then cry/yell/both in the closet of your house alone. I give you permission to feel your emotions fully, sit with them, converse with them, be present with what you are feeling, acknowledge it. This is a mindfulness practice that can aid in recalibration of our psyche, particularly useful in times of stress.

If you would like to talk to someone who gets it (has kids who are with them 24/7), please join us every Wednesday night 7-8 on Zoom (check Facebook or email me for a link) for our Parents/Caregivers' Chalice Circle where we process and center with other parents and caregivers. We also have an All Ages Chalice Circle for parents/caregivers, children and youth that's lighter but still provides the much-needed human connection and warmth. These groups are open to everyone who fits the brackets. If you have a friend or neighbor who is looking for support, please invite them. The more, the merrier. If the group gets too large, we will host a second circle.

I leave you now with a prayer and a blessing for the month to come.

Spirit of Life,

Mystery

Yes, that's Mystery with a big M

A huge M to what and when and how and where and why oh why

We find ourselves in the perfect vision year

2020

With imperfect hands, hearts and minds to understand

The reasoning? The randomness?

The rawness

Of being alive when death surrounds us

Spirit of Life,

Blessed are the healthcare workers who stand on the frontlines of this pandemic

Blessed are the grocery store workers who keep stock

Blessed are the delivery drivers who risk their health to deliver us everything

Blessed are the families who may feel way too close or way too apart during this time

Blessed is the time for giving us the chance to save thousands of lives

Blessed is the person reading this for they are precious, worthy of this task of living and loving in difficult and dangerous time

Amen.

Blessed be.

With love,

Catherine

From the Board of Trustees

As your Board of Trustees, we recognize that this is a unique, uncertain and unprecedented time in so many ways in our own personal lives and as a congregation. In this moment, we are focusing our time and energy on taking care of ourselves and one another – including checking in with every member household and providing what support we can in this difficult time. We are heartened by the care that members of our community have shown for one another as well as embracing other ways to connect as a congregation.

As we contemplate the uncertainty in the larger world and our own lives, and to give ourselves more time to better understand how it will impact our own financial plans, we wanted you to know that we have decided to extend the stewardship campaign through the remainder of the church year ending on

June 30 instead of concluding it in early April. During this extended period, there will be additional information and opportunities to participate and support UUCB. We will learn more about the impact this virus is having on the wider world and better assess how it impacts us as families – including the church family.

So this is kind of just taking a deep breath, looking around at all of the joy and wonder in our world, among our friends and in our beloved UUCB and appreciating the connections that help us call this our home.

Note: Each month a different member of the Board of Trustees writes this column so you can get to know them better and get a sense of the issues dealt with by the Board. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Board as a whole.

From the Executive Director

Tess Snook O’Riva, Executive Director



I have heard so many words describing the times that we are now in – unprecedented, historical, even mind-blowing. It’s just plain hard right now. I don’t have the resources I do when in the office. My printer is down.

The kids are supposed to be doing schoolwork but are playing Undertale. One of our housemates is sequestered in the back room because they’re coughing. (No fever, thank goodness.)

For my own sanity, I have adopted a habit of asking the question I heard on the first UUCB Facebook Live Sunday worship service. “What hidden blessings are you finding during this time?” So I’ve been looking for the silver linings everywhere I can.

I am appreciating slowing down and letting go of unrealistic expectations. None of us have the mental, emotional, or physical resources to do as much as we are used to doing. And that’s okay. I am recommitting to radical self-care (when was the last time I took a bubble bath?) and have joined the Oprah/Deepak Meditation Challenge (highly recommended). I didn’t really need a world-wide crisis for me to internalize this month’s theme of Renewal, but here we are.

Another silver lining is the ability to make progress on some long-term projects, at work and at home. Antonio continues to address some much-needed repairs on campus, as his job of ensuring the physical safety and

security of our campus is essential. Construction is also considered essential so that we can provide another housing option sooner rather than later.

Discussions continue about how to best support our staff during this time. Most of our regular staff can work from home, but our hourly staff is directly affected by the canceled events and worship services. Through the generous support of our members, we continue to have enough resources to be able to support them during this time of uncertainty. Many people are stepping up even more to help make sure others are cared for with increased volunteering and donations to the Minister's Discretionary Fund.

This is a time to stick together. To remember that community is a concept we hold in our hearts, not visit on the weekends. This IS an unprecedented time, and at least I get to go through it with all of you.

The Coordinating Team advises the ED and meets the second and fourth Thursdays from 10 am to 12 noon. If you're interested in attending, please contact the Executive Director to verify meeting time and place. Questions for the CT or ED? Email ED@uucb.org.

From the Treasurer

Larry Nagel

The Finance team continues to gain a foothold on the UUCB finances. I am looking forward to receiving the report of a full and complete audit within the next couple of months, but it may take longer. The good news is that preparing the books for audit is helping to add clarity and transparency to what was a very confusing set of books.



For the Financial period ending January 31, 2020, we are in a very comfortable position. There are a few items I would like to highlight. First, pledge income has improved considerably but is still a cause for concern. Year-to-Date Pledge income is less than budget by \$59,710, but Pledge Income has improved by \$44,108 from December 2019. Second, we have received the second installment of the Wake Now Our Vision grant, somewhat offsetting the shortfall in pledge income. Overall, Year-to-Date Total Revenue is behind budget by \$1,737.

Finally, Year-to-Date Expenses are \$47,786 less than budgeted.

The bottom line is that the Year-to-Date Surplus is \$77,481, which is \$49,522 better than budgeted.

I am still looking for a volunteer to be the Assistant Treasurer, and I am looking for volunteers to serve on the Financial Advisory Council. If you are interested, please contact me at lwn@att.net or call me at (510) 558-0842 or (510) 502-6244.

Social Justice Council

Norie Clarke

Join us online through Zoom to participate in the next Social Justice Council Meeting, **Wednesday, April 15, 6–8 pm**. Watch for details on the Social Justice discuss list as the day draws nigh.



March again was a busy one for us until it wasn't, in terms of planned gatherings. And you heard of much of what we did at the beginning of the month in the March Beacon. So, now is a good opportunity to look at some of the Council's work in further depth.

In late February, the People of Color Caucus (POCC) and the Whites Opposing White Supremacy (WOWS) came together to talk about how the separate groups were doing and where we are going from there. While the POCC and the WOWS most often meet separately, we are dedicated to working as partners in confronting racism by having joint meetings two or three times per year. POCC and WOWS met (1) to discuss feedback from our joint POCC/WOWS 12/15/19 meeting and (2) to discuss how to move forward our mutual goals:

- To work together on issues of racism.
- To get to know one another at deeper levels, including understanding how racism has affected each of us.
- To collaborate on making our UUCB community more welcoming to people of color.
- To work on being allies for one another.

As partners in the struggle, we value and support each other, knowing that processing the impact of racism in our individual lives may sometimes be very difficult. Racism survives, keeping us divided and fearful. In our partnership, we defy racism: fear does not stop us.

The POCC, the WOWS, and the entire Social Justice Council want to remember **Gwenn White**, an active member of POCC, whose untimely death is a tremendous loss to our community. We will miss her terribly and wish for healing and comfort for her family and friends, and for us all.

On March 20th, members of the **Accompaniment Team** and allies were planning to accompany Rubin, from our accompaniment family, to his Immigration Court hearing. As we struggled to keep everyone safe under the current health conditions, Rubin's lawyers from Jewish Family Protective Services asked everyone to stay away, and plans were revised several times with a final version involving Reverend Christian to drive Rubin to San Francisco and accompany him to the hearing. Then we heard the great news that Rubin's court date has been postponed until November 2022! So now his team will be working to renew his temporary work papers and he will start a two-year period without governmental hassles. A lot can happen for the better in two years and we are hoping for the best.

Literature, Film and Drama Contingent (LFDC)

In March, for Women's History Month, Dorothy Herzberg led a lively discussion on **Ayaan Hirsi Ali's fascinating autobiography, *Infidel***.

Unfortunately, for the time being, public events will not be happening at UUCB. Instead of watching the documentary about our denomination, ***American Heretics: The Politics of the Gospel*** together, it will be aired **via the church Facebook page on Saturday, April 4 at 2 pm** The film's producer will participate.

The LFDC meeting scheduled for April 5, with Marsha Saxton, has been postponed. HOWEVER! you can watch a rerun of ***The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, featuring Judith Heumann, the author (along with Kristen Joiner) of *Being Human: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist****. Included in a future discussion with Marsha will be the Netflix documentary *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*. Marsha will lead the discussion of it all, at our next meeting.... Stay tuned!

I want to thank our community for stepping up to write postcards to the forgotten in our country who have never been contacted and asked to participate in our electoral democracy. We will be writing and calling until the election. Thank you for joining **Reclaim Our Vote**.

We want to remind everyone about the important matters to be discussed at the next meeting. Our proposals for **Sponsored Projects** are due. If you do not have an application form, please contact Sheldon Jones.

It is time for us to elect people to step up into leadership roles in the SJC. Please consider taking one of these positions. The more people who participate, the lighter the duties will be. We need a new **Council Chair or two** as Sheldon Jones' term is over. We want to thank Sheldon for his years of service as he has filled almost every position on the Council. Two Co-Chairs are preferable to support and fill in for each other in this important position. We need a new **Treasurer** to track our expenditures in the important work that we do. We need another **Table-Volunteer Coordinator**. Here again two make light work of this organizational position. The Council cannot continue to do the great work that it is doing without guidance from our officers. Please consider these opportunities.

If you are not yet on the SJC email list and would like to be, please write to Sheldon, sejones1950@gmail.com.

Buildings & Grounds Committee

Jane Lundin & Tess Snook O'Riva

The big news is... work continues! Construction is considered an essential service, so our contractors continue to work on the ramp and cottage. The ramp contractors are currently leveling the cement floor, and will then install the cork flooring and paint the metal railings. We are discussing the aesthetic finishing work around repurposing the redwood and the enameled copper tiles that were removed.



We are hoping the cottage will be rentable in the near future. We are trying to work with a remote City of El Cerrito staff to get a business license and complete necessary paperwork while the work continues. Flooring and cabinets are going in this week.

Antonio has installed the cabinet for the rear projector above the Music Room door, behind the current screen in the Sanctuary. The rear projector and associated equipment will be installed and tested as soon as is feasible.

Various long-delayed projects are being completed while the building is empty. New signage for uneven walkways, additional fire extinguishers, and anti-slip mats have been added in response to our annual liability insurance audit. Our entire fire alarm system is being tested throughout the campus. The cancel

floor is being repaired to remove a long-standing trip hazard. We have a lot to look forward to when we return to our beloved church!

If you have any questions or want to help out, contact Jane Lundin at (510) 778-9055 or jmlundin@toast.net.

Partner Church Committee

Stephanie Ann Blythe

We're not going to Transylvania this summer after all. Our tour group leader had to pull the plug. Most things regarding Partner Church are on hold right now. The Spring Transylvanian Tea at Starr King School for the Ministry has been postponed. Fortunately, we all got to hear the Balázs Scholar, Rev. Elöd Szabó, preach at UUCB on March 8. Here's something we can do in the meantime: How about we set up a Facebook Live or Zoom exchange with our partners? We could have fun trying to find a mutually agreeable time, given the 9-hour time difference. When we are worshipping, they are getting ready for bed! And vice versa.



What more can Anne or I tell you? We're waiting for the answers, just like you! You can always contact Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net.



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