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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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From the Ministers

For many of us, this pandemic has been a period of extremes. Those whose work is deemed essential find themselves busier than ever on the "front lines" of keeping people's lights on, garbage collected, bellies fed, and bodies cared for. Those who have been able to shelter-in-place at home have had some parts of their life



come to a complete stop while others have ramped up. Many of us living in isolation are hungry for human touch and interaction while others feel like we will burst if we don't get some time apart from the people we live with.

For many of us the pandemic has also been a wake-up call. It's shown us just how essential so many underpaid workers are in our country. It's revealed how unprepared our current government is to manage a nationwide crisis. And it's woken us up to the profound connection we share with all other human beings around the globe, in ways both beautiful and terrible.

We hear friends share about wanting to feel safe going shopping again, how much they can't wait to get a haircut, but at the same time feeling relief that their formerly fast-paced lives have settled into a slower, simpler rhythm. Days are filled with helping kids with distance learning, back-to-back Zoom calls, socially distanced walks around the neighborhood, navigating lines at the grocery store, waiting for our groceries to be delivered and hoping we wind up getting everything we ordered, and so much cooking and dish washing. But we no longer have to deal with getting the kids and their gear out the door by 7:30 or driving through rush hour traffic. Endangered animals are repopulating their native lands, the Great Lakes are so clear you can see the sunken shipwrecks from the air, and L.A. is free of smog for the first time in decades.

We know some things will never be the same, that this experience will impact us and our world in lasting ways. We hope some of those ways will include lasting protections and benefits for workers in the gig economy and other underpaid positions. We long for some things to go back the way they were, and yet we see how much better reduced human travel is for the planet. So, where do we go from here?

No matter how you answer this question for yourself, we hope you will use this time when so many things have been brought to a halt to go within. This month, as we delve together into the worship theme of "integrity," we hope you will take time to reflect deeply on how this experience is shaping your sense of priorities and values, what pieces of your life you will welcome back with open arms when things begin to open back up, and what things from sheltering-in-place you may want to take with you into the future. As for us, we will be looking forward to any opportunities we have to connect with all of you before our departure in mid-June. And we will be carrying into the future our gratitude for all of the good work and memories we've shared with you over the last four years.

In faith and affection,

Reverends 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. If you for any reason are especially vulnerable,

contact: <u>GroceryDelivery@uucb.org</u>, 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

Facebook Live and YouTube Live, 11 am on Sundays

Theme for May: Integrity

May 3: The Integrity of Our Mission, Kathryn Jay preaching. Each week, whether online or in person, we all take a moment to proclaim the mission of UUCB: "to create loving community, inspire spiritual growth, and encourage lives of integrity, joy, and service." In these uncertain times, what does it mean to live a life of integrity? What does it mean to be a community of integrity? Knowing that there is so much to grieve and there is so much to do, we will explore how to live more fully into the shared integrity of our congregation. Board members will serve as Worship Associates this week.

May 10 (Mother's Day): Flower Ceremony Sunday, Rev. Kristin preaching; Cynthia Asprodites, Worship Associate. Join us for this beloved annual service celebrating the bouquet of community. In order to celebrate virtually, this year we encourage everyone to send us pictures of flowers to use in the service. Take a meditative walk around your neighborhood or yard and take pictures of flowers, or make a nature mandala and take a picture of that. People of all ages are invited to send pictures to RevChristian@uucb.org by Thursday, May 7.

May 17: Facing the Unknown, Rev. Christian preaching. Over two millennia ago, Heraclitus said that change is the only constant in life. While this is old wisdom, our world and lives seem to be bearing it out in new ways. This week in worship, we focus on how to prepare ourselves spiritually for all of the unknowns that lie ahead of us. Please join us on Zoom at 12:30 for our annual Celebration and Planning congregational meeting.

May 24: Doctors of Durability, Revs. Christian and Kristin preaching. This week in worship we honor the wisdom of our elders and the resilience that comes from long, full lives.

May 31: To be announced.

Good Neighbor for May:

<u>Crisis Support Services of Alameda County</u> provides a welcoming and safe environment for those in crisis. Their approach is rooted in the belief that

healing is possible through collaboration with clients at every stage of service.

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:

Online

https://zoom.us/j/332046821

Meeting ID: 332 046 821 Password: 810131 Telephone

Dial (669) 900 6833 US

Thursday Vespers in April

May 7, 14, 21, 28 Zoom, 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:

Online

https://zoom.us/j/690225549

Meeting ID: 690 225 549 Password: 251288 Telephone

Dial (669) 900 6833

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:

<u>Crisis Support Services of Alameda County</u> provides a welcoming and safe environment for those in crisis. Their approach is rooted in the belief that healing is possible through collaboration with clients at every stage of service.



Personal Theology

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 31, we will not be holding our regularly scheduled meetings during the month of May.

Please stay safe!

Gloria Merrill
Personal Theology Committee

For more information contact <u>Anne Wardell</u> or <u>Gloria Merrill</u>, 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 discussion group to explore our humanity, values, ideas.

"A free and responsible search for truth and meaning."

(Fourth principle of Unitarian Universalism.)

May 2020

May 3 – January and February 2020 in the Trump administration (drawing on NY Times article by David Sanger et al.) Lee Lawrence and Sandy Nixon

May 10 – Short topics and topic selection for June Ray Westergard

May 17 – Sharing the creative projects that keep us sane Diane Rusnak

May 24 – Governor Newson and his actions regarding Covid-19 Anne Fitzmaurice

May 31 – Sex in the time of plague Ray Westergard, Lee Lawrence, and Al Kueffner

Group managers: Susan Singh, Ray Westergard, Al Kueffner, Lee Lawrence, Kris Homme, Anne Fitzmaurice. Communications: Marcia

Bates, mjbates@ucla.edu

NEWCOMERS WELCOME!!

Family Ministry

Catherine Boyle, Acting Director of Family Ministry

Is it 1420 or 2020? Using the Ancient Spiritual Practice of Lectio Divina to Center for Young People



Centuries before our own in Europe, humans chose to retreat from society into monasteries and convents to

center their lives on the Holy with prayer and quiet contemplation. While monasteries and convents still exist today, they aren't many people's first choice when it comes to deciding a life path. However, with the pandemic and shelter-in-place orders, we may very well feel like a monk trapped in four walls. Instead of copying the Bible with delicate and precise strokes, we are tasked with keeping a four-year-old from coloring all over the walls. After wrestling crayons away from the child and smelling of bleach, we may very well think: "This is not what I signed up for." Yet the walls persist and life continues on.

In these frantic and tense moments (whether it be because of a four-year-old, a fourteen-year-old, or even a forty-year-old), it may be difficult to hold space in your heart. We love our families, but living together 24/7 can grind the nerves of even the most patient monk or nun. I offer you a spiritual practice of Lectio Divina that you can do together as a family or apart. Lectio Divina ("divine reading" in Latin) arose from the Catholic tradition, but you need not be Catholic or believe in God(s) to benefit from it. It is the process of reading a bit of text over and over again with time for meditation and reflection. This practice gives space for cultivating stillness. It may be difficult for smaller children, but there are solutions to make it work. Plus, as with all things, practice makes it easier.

 Selecting your reading. While the Bible is traditionally the book of choice for Lectio Divina, any poem (religious or secular) works. You need not use an entire piece for it. 100-300 words is a good-sized chunk for prose. Poems lend themselves beautifully for this practice. Check on

Worship Web on <u>UUA.org</u> to find readings. You can also use poems for children for younger participants.

- 2. **Read Aloud Once**. Read the reading aloud once. Give about thirty seconds to a minute (or less for younger folks) to people to think about the reading. After silence, ask participants what part of the reading spoke to them and to share with the group.
- 3. **Read Aloud Again**. Repeat step two. See if participants pick up on different aspects. Ask children why that specific part speaks to them.
- 4. **Read Aloud a Final Time**. Repeat the process a final time. After discussing what spoke to you each, ask children if there is a lesson we can learn from the piece and how we can implement it.

Another way to make Lectio Divina accessible for younger audiences is to follow the steps but instead of just talking about the selections that spoke to them, have the children draw or color how the piece makes them feel.

Like all things, practice makes perfect. Lectio Divina may look difficult for younger folks at first, but you may be surprised at how your child takes to it.

I wish you health, safety and peace during this time.

Blessed be,

Catherine

From the Board of Trustees

David Roberts

As our individual lives slow down and change due to the coronavirus, we are confronted with the practical and technological challenges of learning to live differently. Operating as a Board is no different. Together, we are learning how to better manage our communications with one another and with the congregation. We are all becoming adept at meeting on Zoom, keeping our mute buttons on – or off. Some of us are checking our emails and text hourly instead of once a day so we can respond in real time. And we are integrating three new members on the Board.

Every time there is a transition with new Board members, there is a new dynamic. Personalities are different, communication styles are different, skills are different. Usually, the integration of new members is an iterative process

that starts with a retreat whose primary purpose is learning more about one another, identifying and discussing key concerns, ideas and plans for the coming year and growing comfortable with new group dynamics.

Board agendas over the past year have often focused on financial issues (including the stewardship campaign, the budget, plans for Freestone, campus repairs), mission and vision (reminding ourselves of and refreshing our commitments to the fundamental mission of the Church), learning how to better function as a Board (Hotchkiss book) and integrating more complete reporting by our ED. We continue to grow, engage and faithfully steward our resources. But it is requiring more from each of us on the Board – more time, more effort, more patience, more resiliency, more communication and more connection.

As individuals, we are confronting some of the same practical matters that all of us are – from staying safe at home, getting groceries, continuing our work lives from a home office, coping with the loss of income and jobs, staying connected with others who are important in our daily lives.

And then – in the midst of all this, we have been surprised, indeed shocked, by the sudden resignation of our Ministers. In the few days since we've learned of their decision, we've all had to process for ourselves and strive to help the rest of the congregation process it as well.

Our responsibility as a Board goes beyond our own concerns, our own struggle to understand. It requires us to act on behalf of the congregation as well. We are committed to not just listening and sharing but to acting in a fully transparent way to make plans for continuing stability and continuity in the Church.

At this critical time, it is helpful to remind ourselves of the many strengths our congregation enjoys.

Financially we will have challenges, but we have many resources, not least of which are the pledges already made and still to be made by members. We have substantial income from our rentals to the schools and the community. We have assets including property, endowment and Legacy gifts in the future.

Organizationally, we are enjoying a robust administrative and facilities staff, overseeing upgrades to our scheduling, financial, communications and operating systems, fully capable of guiding us through difficult times.

Spiritually, as a lay-led congregation, we have been blessed not just with our professional staff but with experienced and capable Worship and Pastoral Care associates, community ministers, Caring Circles, a Director of Family

Ministry, active and engaged committees throughout the Church that continue to carry our mission in ways broad and deep. As for the future, we have multiple options for continued ministerial leadership – and no decisions have been made except to keep our options open.

UUCB has been a thriving institution for nearly 130 years. Whatever travails we encounter in this difficult time will help us all recognize our common humanity and purpose. We are confident in our shared mission. We continue to be a beacon to our community and the world.

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

So...Heard any good rumors lately?

Will our resources be depleted at the hands of leaders meeting in secret for their own nefarious purposes?



Have our ministers been planning for years to ditch us in the middle of the world's worst pandemic and economic crisis? Will we even survive these back-to-back-to-back crises?

Okay, that was really fun for me. For the record, no one is really saying those things. At least, not to me. I took all the concerns, questions, and outright rumors I *have* heard and "catastrophized" them. Why? Because it helps everything that sounds remotely similar lose its impact. This isn't any more ludicrous than many of the other conspiracy theories we've been seeing online and hearing reported on the radio. In the absence of information that resonates with our existing world view, our minds will make up a story. That's how the brain works.

Catastrophizing is a real thing. It is the psychological tendency to take "what if" scenarios to the worst possible conclusion. And so many people who wouldn't normally be prone to this tendency are finding themselves in a downward spiral of worry. About this virus. About the economy. About the government. And now about our church.

I'm not a Pollyanna by default, but I do see opportunities in challenging times. Just like all the Public Works projects that were moved up to take advantage of reduced traffic, I am scanning the landscape for silver linings. More people that I haven't worked with before are volunteering on projects that would have languished as "unimportant" if business were continuing as usual. We are pushing our technological capacity every day and finding expertise in the congregation we didn't know we had. We are elevating the transparency of the decision-making process by making our meetings more accessible.

Okay, so it's a little Pollyanna-ish. I'm so happy to hear of turtles, dolphins, and blue skies, that when I think about what life will be like post-pandemic, I'm convinced that some of these changes will be for the greater good. UUCB will continue to reduce its carbon footprint by making all future meetings *also* accessible virtually. We will have both the option of in-person and remote connections, including for worship services.

But while we are protecting each other by staying home, we can get frustrated/stir crazy/depressed. This is when we need our community the most. This is the time when we pick up the phone, log into yet another Zoom session, include personal check-ins inside otherwise normal email correspondence, etc. This is when we reach out for support, reach deep inside for a calming presence, and reach down to help others who are struggling that day. And we all have that day. Thank you all for being so understanding when *I* have that day. We are in community together, and never before have I felt that so strongly. Thank you all.

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? Email ED@uucb.org.

From the Treasurer

Larry Nagel

The Finance team continues to gain a foothold on the UUCB finances. We are in the final stages of completing the budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021, and will be presenting the budget for approval at the May 17, 2020 Congregational Meeting. Work continues on preparing the financial records for an audit.



For the period ending February 29, 2020, we are in a fairly good financial position, but the events in March have cast a lot of uncertainty on our financial future. Pledge income continues to be a cause for concern. Year-to-Date Pledge income is less than budget by \$65,021, which is \$5,311 worse than at the end of January. Only time will tell how pledges will be affected by the shutdown.

The bottom line is that, as of the end of February, the Year-to-Date Surplus is \$90,487, which is \$82,548 better than budgeted. Our cash reserves stand at a very healthy \$361,796, and the UUA Board Designated Endowment is now at \$772,545.

If you have any questions, please contact me at lwn@att.net or call me at (510) 558-0842.

Social Justice Council

Norie Clarke

In the time of Plague and Locusts

The Social Justice Council had their first Zoom meeting as we prepare for the new fiscal year starting in June.

This is the time when the Council wraps up projects of

the current year and plans our **Sponsored Projects** for the next. To recap:



UUCB Sanctuary Project, Anita Mermel

Update on the Accompaniment Team helping a Central American couple negotiate their lives under the current Immigration laws. As mentioned last month, Rubén, who continues fighting his deportation ruling of two years ago, will not need to return to the ICE court for another two and a half years. He, his wife Anita, and their little girls have finished their move to improved and secure housing. Rubén is still working, but Anita is not, and won't be for the foreseeable future, nor will she receive any taxpayer or unemployment relief. It is uncertain as to whether Rubén will get COVID-related financial relief from the feds. We hope so, as he has a legitimate SSN and temporary working papers until his immigration status is resolved. Anita sends her sincerest gratitude to all the members of the Sanctuary Team, and the church at large, for the multiple ways the family has been assisted over the past two years. Randall Hudson has been continuing to collect items for them and help them

through everyday issues they confront, such as their address change and an erroneous parking ticket in San Francisco.

Social Justice Council Sponsored Projects continuing to meet online:

Confronting Racism and Oppression. Helen Tinsley-Jones, Julie Rogers

We remind you that the SJC votes annually to bring the support of the Council and the Congregation to two or three Sponsored Projects that, with a budgeted application request to the Council and at least 4 or 5 volunteers committed to working on the Project, are voted on by the Council. Other smaller events throughout the year may request recompense from the council for expenses. That said, the **CRO** project spawned ongoing groups interested in continuing to further their understanding of the issues.

Literature, Film and Drama Contingent (LFDC) led by Camille Parker

The LFDC meeting on May 3rd is happening! Marsha Saxton will lead our discussion and Lonnie Moseley has ZOOM-control. The meeting will be from 1 'til 3, with a break at 2:15, during which time you can stretch, grab a cuppa, or dance the Macarena! We'll regroup for any remaining questions or comments. Watch for an email from Lonnie providing the link to ZOOM-in.

On the agenda for discussion will be: (1) Sticks & Stones: Disabled People's Stories of Abuse, Defiance and Resilience, edited by Marsha Saxton (see Camille's LFDC email attachment, 4/15). And (2) Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution, now streaming on Netflix. Called "[A] spirited look at grassroots activism," the documentary was executive-produced by President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama. Judith Heumann is featured in the documentary; watch her appearance on *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*.

People of Color Caucus (PCC) led by Helen Tinsley-Jones and Whites Opposing White Supremacy (WOWS) led by Julie Rogers and Jane Eisenstark continue to meet online at their usual times.

Climate Crisis led by Sheila Tarbet in partnership with the Pachamama Alliance is winding up their very successful 2019/20 year, vividly bringing the issue to our congregation and engaging outside community organizations in examining the crisis through Project Drawdown offering actions suggested by leading thinkers in America. Sheila is considering another year as a sponsored

project on this issue.

Human Trafficking, led by Anne Wardell, also had a very successful forum to educate the congregation on child trafficking, as the Bay Area is the number one hotspot. She will be wrapping up her 2-year SP this month. Anyone interested in picking up the torch? Applications are due soon.

Tiny Houses, led by Jim Acock and Jane Eisenstark, and in collaboration with **Youth Spirit Artworks** and a large coalition of other religious organizations, have led our congregation in a 2-year project to build 26 tiny houses for homeless youth. We have been storing four of the houses in our parking lot. The organizers are considering applying for another year as Sponsored Project as the YSA builds out the location for the tiny house community.

Reclaim Our Vote, we want to thank the congregation again for engaging during the shutdown as volunteers for the NAACP, to write 1000 postcards to voters in Georgia who have been purged from the voter rolls, telling them how to get reinstated. Reclaim Our Vote is a project of Center for Common Ground, in coalition with the NAACP, Black Voters Matter, DemLabs, Mi Familia Vota and VoteRiders. Its mission is to reach out to People of Color who have been purged. They have several programs to get out the vote. They have achieved a 20-25% success with postcards! And a 65% voting success with phone banking. This project will be continuing until November and Norie Clarke is considering expanding it into a Sponsored Project, with phone banking online to walk people through the vote by mail process and urging them to the polls as well. Are people interested in going further with this project? Let Norie know.

Congrats to Grads – keep your eyes open for Lonnie Moseley's collecting for a proper send off for our graduating Seniors.

Social Justice Council Meeting May 10, Mother's Day 6:30 pm via Zoom

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

Buildings & Grounds Committee

Jane Lundin & Tess Snook O'Riva

The Chancel Accessibility Ramp is done! The cork flooring is installed, the trim has been painted and the railings primed. There's some aesthetic work we still want to do, like repurposing the colored tiles, adding some texture to the railings, and curtaining off the path to the Music Room entrance during services & events. The good news is, we have time!



The cottage is looking great and will be ready in the near future. The landscaping has been updated so the curb appeal has gone up dramatically. We hope to record a virtual tour and post it soon.

Antonio has trimmed the trees in the atrium and repaired the roof of the boiler room. Many broken things throughout the church have been fixed, and we continue to make great progress on addressing items on the master list of projects. The Sanctuary has been deep cleaned and we are renting a floor scrubber to clean the rest of the building.

The campus is in bloom! Yao is making sure things are watered and cared for and will be using the lawn mower as soon as it is fixed. We have to be careful that the weeds don't get out of control for fire abatement reasons.

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 <u>imlundin@toast.net</u>.

Partner Church Committee

Stephanie Ann Blythe

Even during these long days of shelter-in-place there are still things going on in the Partner Church world. Not the least of which is the announcement that our ministers, Kristin and Christian, are leaving. We would have hoped that they would meet face to face with Rev. Attila



someday, whether in Berkeley or Homoródújfalu. I guess it will now have to be via Zoom, and it will have to happen soon!

Rev. Elöd Szabó, this year's Balázs Scholar, has said this about his time at Starr King:

"With less than three months left until we go home, our thoughts are also connected with our family and our people in Transylvania. They are in a somewhat similar situation, schools and churches are closed, but schools and

churches try to do their best to keep their message heard and their mission work."

His Easter message certainly applies to this time of pandemic:

"Today, on the first day of Easter, we have celebrated the eternal power of the values Jesus has preached: love, forgiveness, responsibility. If we all can strengthen ourselves with these values, even if the world seems now to be a place of suffering, there can and will be a new world rising out of this suffering. May we have the wisdom to ask the honest and right questions and find an honest and meaningful life for ourselves and for our communities."

Some of you have asked about our Village Education Fund. It's alive and well, but it needs replenishment. Next time you're mailing a check to UUCB or making a contribution via PayPal, consider a donation to the fund! You can always contact Stephanie Ann Blythe at <a href="mailto:stephanicalcolor: stephanicalcolor: left) stephanicalcolor: stephanicalcol











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