

Beacon on the Hill December 2017

From the Ministers

Happy Holidays! Even here in the temperate Bay Area, there's a bit of a nip in the air. The nights are longer and longer as we approach the winter solstice, and both in our congregation and in our personal lives this is the season of holidays.



Our diverse religious community has people who celebrate both many different holidays and none at all. Those may include Hanukkah, Solstice, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and more. Though each of these comes from a unique tradition and has its own distinctive elements, they do share some things in common, not the least of them being that all occur about the same time in the calendar year. Each also reminds us of traditions handed down from those who have come before, each encourages us to be together in community, and each reminds us that love and joy and hope can come to us even in the least likely of times and places.

So it is again this year. In what has been a trying year, we wait and hope.

What does it mean to celebrate in this season when many of us have struggled this year? Whether that was because of wildfires across the North Bay that have taken homes and lives, other natural disasters that have touched us or those we love, or difficulties in health, finances, or other parts of our lives, many of us have felt pain and difficulty in 2017.

As we enter December and the onslaught of holidays, find time to be kind to yourself. Remember that it's OK not to feel joyful, regardless of what the world around us tells us. It's also certainly OK to feel joyful, too! Make sure

that you care for your own needs first, so that each of us can be healthy as the demands of the season crop up.

And when things start to seem overwhelming, either because of all the difficulties in the world, or just the difficulties in your own household, we offer this thought: Hope. Each of us can access hope, even if we have to borrow a little from a friend!

It doesn't always make sense, nor does it need to. Hope isn't a rational evaluation at our prospects; often it is despite a rational evaluation of our prospects. As the Unitarian minister Theodore Parker once said, we believe that the arc of the universe bends toward justice. The problem is that it bends very slowly, and sometimes even takes a bend in the wrong direction temporarily. Our lifetimes will not be enough to fix every problem or disaster, but our hope lies in that our collective efforts, given enough time, can make a real and lasting difference for the good in our world. Hope can help us through the worst of situations, not because it blinds us to difficult realities, but because it brings out the best in us despite those realities. In this season of holidays, may hope come to each of us as the most precious gift.

In faith,

Revs. Christian and Kristin

Worship Services in December

Sanctuary, 11 am on Sundays (note special days/times for Solstice and Holiday services)

Theme for Month: Hope

Sunday, December 3 – *Hurry Up and Wait*,

Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt preaching, with David Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Roberts, Worship Associate. This week begins a

season of waiting and hoping before the joy of the winter holidays. In this

service we will consider hope from a Buddhist perspective, and what hope has to offer us not just in a foretold future, but here and now.

Sunday, December 10 – *The Shadow Side*, Intern Minister Amanda Weatherspoon preaching, with Jeanne Foster, Worship Associate. Often, darkness is equated with despair, what is unwanted, what we want to rid ourselves of. But how is darkness transformed when we approach it from a place of respect, hope, and love? What lessons can we learn from our shadow side? How can we sit in and with our shadow?

Sunday, December 17 – *The Real Hanukkah Story*, Rev. Christian Schmidt preaching, with Ann Riley, Worship Associate. Hanukkah isn't just about presents and eight candles; it's a story of resistance and resilience. Come hear about the Maccabees, the resistance fighters of their day, and eternal flames. *After the Time for All Ages, elementary age children will join Intern Minister, Amanda Weatherspoon, in the Fireside Room for Children's Chapel. Preschoolers accompanied by an adult are also welcome to participate in Children's Chapel.*

Thursday, December 21 at 6 pm, *Winter Solstice Service*, Intern Minister, Amanda Weatherspoon, worship leader. The Winter Solstice is a time to journey inward and reflect on the lessons, joys, and sorrows that have been provided during the year. It is also a time of celebration – celebration of the light and the darkness that is in each of us. Join us for a time of deep reflection, stillness, ritual and music as we gather and honor the Winter Solstice! There will be a potluck reception following the service.

Sunday, December 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE

- **11 am – *Joy, Jeans, and Jammies***, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt; Elinor Armer, pianist. Join us for a lighthearted and joy-filled service for people of all ages in the Fireside Room. Save the fancy clothes for tonight – all are invited to come in comfy clothes! ***No religious education classes or childcare today.***

- **5 pm – *Christmas Eve Family Service***, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt and Intern Minister Amanda Weatherspoon, worship leaders, with Cami Fuller, Worship Associate. In this shorter service geared toward children and families, we will hear the Christmas story, pray together, sing carols, and light candles. Everyone is invited to bring cookies to share after the service!
- **10 pm – *Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols Service***, Rev. Christian Schmidt and Intern Minister Amanda Weatherspoon, worship leaders, with Jim Gasperini, Worship Associate. In this contemplative service of lessons and carols, our gifted choir will help us weave together sacred narration, modern poetry, prayer, traditional carols, special music, and candlelight for a refreshing take on what the Christmas story means for us today.

Sunday, December 31 – *Burning of Grudges*, Reverends Christian and Kristin Grassel Schmidt. This New Year's Eve morn, we will prepare for 2018 with a ritual of cleansing and letting go of those things that limit or burden us. This is a service for all ages. ***No religious education classes or childcare today.***

December Good Neighbor (sharing our offerings):

[Berkeley Food and Housing Project](#) provides emergency food, shelter, housing placement and support services to homeless individuals and families.

Personal Theology

Sundays, 9:30 am, Fireside Room

Dec. 3: Dr. David Presti, author of *Foundational Concepts in Neuroscience: A Brain-Mind Odyssey*, is a neurobiologist, psychologist, and cognitive scientist at UC Berkeley. He also teaches neuroscience to Tibetan monks and nuns in India and Bhutan and is part of contemporary dialogue between science and religion initiated by the Dalai Lama. He will talk about the ***“The Boundary between Biophysical Science and Concepts of Spirit and Soul.”***

Dec. 10: Dr. Jeremy Taylor, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, has worked with dreams for over forty years; he blends the values of spirituality with an active social conscience and a Jungian perspective. Founding member and past president of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Dr. Taylor has written four books integrating dream symbolism, mythology, and archetypal energy. His topic is ***“The Power of (Archetypal) Symbols: Awake and Asleep.”***

Dec. 17: Dr. Jeremy Taylor (see bio above). ***“Since There Is ALWAYS More Going on Than Meets the Eye, Curiosity Is the Most Important Spiritual Energy We Have at Our Disposal.”***

(No Personal Theology session on Dec. 24 or 31)

Humanist Connections

Sundays, 12:30 pm, followed by a potluck at 2 pm. Check kiosk in Atrium for location. Format: A 10- to 15-minute presentation followed by moderated, timed discussion and a potluck at 2 pm (bring a dish to share or donate \$5).

All are welcome!

Dec. 3: Polyamory: The New Frontier? – Kathy Rai

Dec. 10: From Harvey Weinstein to Judge Roy Moore: Is It a Revolution? – Lee Lawrence

Dec. 17: *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire* by Kurt Andersen – Earl Williamson

The group will also meet offsite at 2 pm on **Friday, December 22** (topic Ta Nehisi Coates' *We Were Eight Years in Power*), and **Sunday, Dec. 31** (topic Copenhagen 22: Climate Change Report). Contact [Lee Lawrence](#) if you would like more information.

Special Events in December

Fri. Dec. 1, 7 to 9 pm, Revs. Kristin and Christian are throwing a **Holiday Party for Youth and Youth Advisors**. There will be food, desserts, a Yankee Swap, and a big tree in the Atrium to decorate together. Please invite your middle- and high-schoolers, even if not currently enrolled in UUCB programs. Each should bring a wrapped present that costs \$5 or less for the Yankee Swap.

Sun. Dec. 3, 10:30 am to 1:30 pm – Holiday Fair, with silent auction and sale of jewelry, gifts, and other holiday-related stuff! Contact [Ann Harlow](#) to donate or help.

Friday, Dec. 8, 8 pm – Daniel Schmidt's 75th Birthday Gamelan Concert and Reception (fundraiser for UUCB; \$20/15; no one turned away for lack of funds)

Sunday, Dec. 10, 1 pm – Silent Auction bidding closes (winning bidders will be contacted by email)

Friday, Dec. 15, 8 pm – Candlelight Violin and Organ

Concert (fundraiser for UUCB; \$15; no one turned away)

Sun. Dec. 17, 6 pm – Messiah Sing-Along (Holiday Fair sale will continue and substantial snacks and drinks will be available for sale; doors open at 5 pm; \$15/\$10; no one turned away)

Family Ministry

Suzette Anderson-Duggan

‘Tis the end of the season! It has been a year filled with meeting new loved ones, and saying goodbye to old loved ones, and surprises – some good, some tragic – of every kind in between. As a child, the surprise was the object wrapped and ribboned within the box(es) sitting so temptingly under the pine-scented tree. And to be honest, as an adult, it still is wondrous to see a tree tinsel and lighted with colorfully wrapped presents.

Looking back at 2017, the most memorable of gifts has been our coming together in small and grand ways through lunches, committees, chalice circles, volunteerism, vigils, marches, walks, runs, and dinners. The work we do in partnership and in solidarity with one another within UUCB and in the greater community is the best kind of gift that isn’t limited to one day and is too massive to be contained under a tree. And where it leads us and what it makes possible is the loveliest of all surprises.

Family Ministry Events for December

12/1 Holiday Party with the Reverends, middle and high school groups, 7 – 9 pm

12/3 Legacy Links, Middle and High School Groups, Meditation Room, 11 am – 12 pm

Holiday Fair with Craft Activities for Children/Youth, Social Hall, 12 – 1:30

pm

RE Teacher Reflection Circle, Family Ministry Office, 12:15 pm

12/9 Parents' Night Out, free childcare in Skytown, 4:30 – 8 pm

Parents connect briefly in RE Bldg. Room 6 before stepping out.

12/10 Parent Discussion Circle, RE Bldg. Rooms 3 & 4, 9:45 – 10:45 am

RE Teacher Reflection Circle, Family Ministry Office, 12:15 pm

12/17 Children's Chapel, Fireside Room, 11 am – 12 pm

Youth serve as Worship Associates during service

12/24 All Ages Worship Service, Fireside Room, 11 am

Christmas Eve Service and Cookie Potluck, 5 – 7 pm

Last thoughts: Happy Holidays from all of us to all of you!

It's never too late to volunteer! Contact [Colleen Farrell](#) or [Megan Hailey-Dunsheath](#) (RE) or [Karl Rimbach](#) (Legacy Links) to explore how your interests, skills, and experience can meaningfully shape the spiritual formation of our youth.

President's Column

Jack Duggan

I believe my job as President of the Board of Trustees is to work to find a consensus of what the congregation wants to do, aware of what sacrifices have to be made to be the congregation we want to be.

I have opinions but my opinions aren't my guide. For instance, when I joined the congregation I didn't like the way our location put us so far above our community. When I joined the leadership, I realized that our congregation wouldn't survive whole if we tried to sell the Kensington property and resigned myself to making the best of it. When I wrote the article last month on how expensive it is to keep our large church maintained, I wondered if I really wanted to keep maintaining an expensive piece of real estate. Does the property really support the mission of our congregation? Do we need to change the way we use it? I don't have an easy answer for that. I trust our congregation, and I trust the process we are using to make decisions. My opinions count but only as another member of the congregation, and I have a lot of listening yet to do.

In the end, all of us will be called upon to make sacrifices. I'm not saying we will have to sell our cherished and time-honored site, but if we choose to keep it we will have to make the personal sacrifices to do that. What is valuable to us and what contributes to that value?

I see my most important goal as President of the Board is to keep the congregation whole and vital. In other words, whatever decisions we make we do it holding hands, and at the end of this process we are still holding hands, acting together and aware of the sacrifices we have to make to do that.

Music Matters

Bryan Baker

December is full of music at UUCB, including three special musical events. Services will include beautiful solo voice, chorus, percussion, violin, nyckelharpa, and harp. Music for winter, for the festive spirit of the holidays,

and for the mystery and reverence of the season on Christmas Eve.

On **December 8th**, Friday night, Daniel Schmidt celebrates his 75th birthday with a concert of Gamelan music. Daniel is one the leading exponents of sharing the rich tradition of Indonesian music. This innovative and fascinating pursuit that crosses cultural and geographic boundaries has been central to his life's work in music. **8 pm in the Sanctuary.**

The next week, our wonderful organist, Katya Kolesnikova, is joined by the remarkable violinist Bakyt Bekdjanov for a concert of music for violin and organ. This will be music by candlelight, music in the spirit of advent, of quiet attention and reflection and beauty. **December 15, Friday night, at 8 pm in the sanctuary.**

Messiah Sing-Along, Sunday, December 17, at 6 pm in the sanctuary. Join in singing one of the great treasures of Western art, Handel's evergreen *Messiah*. This glorious music is the focus of an uplifting and heartwarming evening when hundreds of music lovers from across the Bay Area come together to hear the orchestra and soloists — including Rev. Kristin! — and to sing the powerful choruses. A marvelous way to feel the holiday glow: Hallelujah!

Yours in harmony,

Bryan

Thoughts from Community Ministry

Rev. Sue Magidson

As I write this column in mid-November, Christmas decorations have already infiltrated many stores. “December is coming,” they say. “Better get ready.” And I shudder, thinking of all the people who will be hurting this month.

Some are missing loved ones. Some are struggling with complicated family dynamics. Some are painfully alone. Some are hungry, homeless, depressed, stretched thin financially. Some don't celebrate Christmas; others struggle with expectations that will never live up to reality. The list goes on and on.

December is eagerly anticipated by some and dreaded by others. This month is so charged and so full, bringing holiday activities, rich food and parties, concerts and special events, but also accentuated loneliness, depression, and grief tangled up with reminders of past Decembers that can never be again. If that weren't enough, these days our daily news is full of repeated horror, anger, grief, and calls to action. It's a lot to navigate.

My prayer is that we make space to hold it all. May we embrace all the joy we can find, pausing amidst the busyness to revel in moments of beauty, magic, and awe. May we reach out to each other with tenderness and care, honoring the multitude of emotions, expectations, and experiences that December brings. May we be gentle and kind with ourselves and each other as we navigate this complicated time, each in our own way, and may we find loving ways to honor our differences.

Holiday blessings to you, dear ones.

Coordinating Team Notes

Deborah Schmidt, Coordinating Team Convener

Out of the Program Council/CT retreat has emerged a re-drafted job description for the Program Council Convener and liaison to the CT, with some consideration of dividing these two roles to reduce workload. We are moving closer to filling this key vacancy.

The CT has recommended to the Board that the special Congregational Meeting be postponed to January so that vital upcoming decisions about asset management and funding of building maintenance will have a firm foundation of information-gathering and sharing.

1 Sheet, 2 Sheets, Green Sheet, Blue Sheet – confused by changes in facilities staff responsibilities and room reservation forms? Here is how it will work starting January 1: The first step in making a space reservation is to fill out a blue sheet, which saves the space and date. If you don't need help with set-up or take-down, that is all you need. If you do need help, also fill out a green sheet to cover the details. Staff is no longer responsible for dishwashing or kitchen cleanup after congregational events. This is both cost-saving and community-building.

As we enter the holidays, our cash flow challenge has been eased substantially, thanks to increased rental income — and to your generous pledges!

The Coordinating Team currently meets on first and third Thursdays from 10 am to noon. If you're interested in attending, please contact the CT Convener to verify meeting time and place. Questions for the CT? Email CT@uucb.org.

Partner Church Committee

Stephanie Ann Blythe, Reporter

Hooray, hooray! The Transylvanian Partner Church Committee took in \$554 at our goulash lunch on November 12. Köszönöm! Thank you very much for buying lunch or making a donation. Unfortunately, we can't sell enough goulash to cover all of the things that we would like to help our friends with in Homoródújfalú.

You know that our biggest priority is the Village Education Fund for the

students in the village. We usually send half of the annual amount in December. We also like to send money for St. Nicholas Day presents for the children, along with a little something for the minister. We recently sent \$1000 for renovation of the parsonage, so our balances are a little bit low right now.

Plain and simple, we still need your financial contributions to cover all of these expenses. We have more than just a partnership with Homoródújfalú; it is a covenantal relationship. The deeper connection we seek is difficult to achieve over the great distance between us, but our contributions help to sustain village life amidst the changes of the 21st Century. We will be celebrating 450 years of Unitarianism in Transylvania in 2018. Our partnership with Újfalú is an important link in this long chain of religious tradition.

So why not write a check to UUCB and put “Village Education Fund” on the memo line. Contact the church office if you wish to use a credit card or arrange for donations on a regular basis. Need more information? Ask [Stephanie Ann Blythe](#) or [Anne Greenwood](#) for anything you need to know about our long partnership with Újfalú.

Buildings and Grounds Committee

Larry Nagel

We have been swamped by numerous maintenance issues at UUCB and have had to put some of the longer-range projects on hold. UUCB failed the latest Fire Inspection because the fire hoses in the standpipe cabinets had not been inspected. The fire hoses are supposed to be inspected every year and replaced every five years, but have not been replaced since 1999. We are working on replacing all of the fire hoses. The Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) supplied by the Kensington Fire Department has been recalled and we are arranging for the necessary recall maintenance. A

limb from one of our Monterey Pines broke and was hanging precariously over the walking trail, so it had to be removed. We also have received an advisory letter from our insurance agency, Guide One, advising us to have the electrical system inspected by a licensed contractor to determine if any updates are necessary. We are working on the design of the renovation of the Safir Room and will present the plans at the next Congregational Meeting, which has been rescheduled for January 2018.

If any of these projects fits your interests and your skills, we would love to have you on our team. Please contact Larry Nagel at (510) 558-0842 or lwn@att.net.

Social Justice News

The Social Justice Council Potluck meeting on Sunday, November 12, heard 90-second presentations from 15 of the 16 organizations nominated to receive **Good Neighbor** donations each month in the coming church year. After the presentations, the members voted for 11 of the organizations. The results were as follows:

1. YEAH! Shelter for Youth in Berkeley – Shelter and services for homeless youth 18 – 25.
2. 1951 Coffee Company – Trains and employs 80 refugees a year in the coffee business.
3. East Bay Center for the Blind – Serves the sight impaired in the East Bay.
4. Developing Indigenous Resources – Community Development in India.
5. Berkeley Food Pantry – Sponsored by Friends and distributes 200,000 meals a year.
6. Hip Hop for Change – Uses hip hop culture to educate for social justice.
7. East Bay Sanctuary Covenant – Sanctuary, advocacy and legal advice to those escaping war, political persecution and other violence.

8. YES Nature to Neighborhoods – Outreach to Richmond youth, adults and families to lead healthy, safe caring communities.
9. Planting Justice – Inspiring disenfranchised residents with skills and resources for food production and economic opportunities.
10. Youth Spirit Artworks – Uses art and art-based jobs to empower the lives of homeless and low-income youth. Participants are paid and make decisions.
11. Read Aloud – Volunteers participate weekly in elementary schools in the West Contra Costa Unified School District by reading individually to K – 2 graders.

Also included in the Good Neighbor program by congregational vote is GRIP, which provides meals, support and housing services to families in Richmond.

From the Literature, Film & Drama Contingent of the Social

Justice Council: On November 5th, Claude Steele, esteemed social psychologist and professor of psychology at Stanford University, shared with us his research into “stereotype threat,” which finds that, put very simply, people believe the stereotypes that have been foisted upon us by society — whether about race, gender, age, etc. — to our detriment. His book, *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*, is fascinating. The LFDC will lighten things up for its meeting on **December 3rd**, when we discuss ***The Obama Inheritance: Fifteen Stories of Conspiracy Noir***, edited by Gary Phillips. **Cordell Sloan** will facilitate the discussion.

Two hundred people gathered on Sunday, November 5th to view ***From A Silk Cocoon***, the story of Satusuki Ina’s parents’ incarceration in Tule Lake during WWII because they were Japanese Americans. There was a very engaging and substantive Q & A after the film, with guests Satsuki Ina, Laura Craig, and Zahra Billoo. A spontaneous collection was taken, divided among the three organizations chosen by our guests. Each received \$200 to assist the work it does: Asian Americans Advancing Justice; Council on American-Islamic Relations; and the Tule Lake Preservation Project.

Annual Winter Clothing Drive for GRIP

As in the past, UUCB is having our annual Winter Warmth for GRIP clothing drive in December. Please go through your closets, or buy new items, to help clothe the GRIP (Greater Richmond Interfaith Program) residents for the cold and wet winter months, and bring your items to church during the first three Sundays in December. A large purple basket to collect your items will be located next to either the Social Justice table or the front doors in the atrium. Thank you.

Other Social Justice Opportunities and Information

Ceasefire Walks: Friday nights in Richmond at 7, contact maw.jane@gmail.com.

GRIP: UUCB volunteers prepare and serve lunch to hungry and homeless people at the GRIP Souper Center in Richmond on the fourth Tuesday of every month. Want to volunteer? Contact [Ray Westergard](#). To help with supper at GRIP on fourth Saturdays, contact [Ariel Smith-Iyer](#).

Read-Aloud: Volunteers needed for next school year to read aloud at local elementary schools in Richmond and San Pablo. Contact [Judy Sam](#).

Poetry

STANDING, HOLDING FIRM

As church service ends
and we hold hands
your hand moves
within my hand

as if about to whisper
an uplifting
immortal phrase.
So I give it a squeeze
to say: "Later, friend."

© Claire J. Baker

MARCH OF THE MUSHROOMS

The mushrooms popped up from between the boards of the deck
Overnight
What does it say about the condition of our deck
That grows?
What does it say about the amount of rain
That falls?

© Carol Carlisle

THE PILOT

Above the worry-shadowed world you glide,
Enraptured by a strange tranquility,
Touched with the eagle's secret ecstasy,
While darkness lies upon the countryside.

Up here it's day, below it's eventide.
Down there a gray and smug monotony,
Ensures they can not even hope to see
These airy spaces long and deep and wide.

Too soon you have to leave this lofty height,
But lofty visions do not fade from view.
They linger in a different kind of sight.

Descending to the Kingdom of the Night,
You bring a sweet, wise smile along with you,
And go on glowing with an inner light.

© Ray Nelson

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Covenant of Right Relations

- We covenant to build a religious community guided by love and sustained by respectful relationships.
- Believing that building healthy relationships is a spiritual practice, we aim to listen appreciatively, speak with care, express gratitude, honor our differences, and assume good intentions.
- We endeavor to communicate directly, honestly, and compassionately, particularly when we are in conflict.
- When we hurt one another, we will try to forgive, make amends, and reconnect in a spirit of love.
- In celebration of the common purpose that unites us, we will do our best to abide by this covenant.

MEMBERSHIP in this Unitarian Universalist congregation is open to all who see this church as their religious home and the principles for which the church stands as their own. People who wish to join participate in a “pathways to membership” session, sign the membership book, and commit to supporting this church through participation and financially. To become a member, please contact our Membership Co-Chairs, Lonnie Moseley or Paul Hudson (membership@uucb.org), or speak with one of the co-ministers.

NEWSLETTER ITEM SUBMISSIONS: Submit announcements and articles by email to beacon@uucb.org. Due to limited space, we do not publish announcements for events occurring outside the church community. **The deadline for submissions** is the 15th of the month. **Questions?**

Please email beacon@uucb.org.

WEB SITE: <http://uucb.org>

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS:

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UUCB general discussion list:

http://groups.google.com/group/uucb_discuss/about

Email list for families: Email family.ministry@uucb.org