

# Beacon on the Hill, April 2016

## From Our Minister's Desk

Rev. Greg Ward

Dear Friends,

Let's talk about what saves us.



I know... this is a conversation that triggers sensitive issues for many of us. Most of us have some experience with that special patronizing question asked with a zealous or judgmental gleam of self-absorption. Or the confusing and guilt inducing notion that someone – who we never met or asked any favors – died on our behalf. Not *that* salvation.

I want to talk about Ms. Hutchinson, my kindergarten teacher, letting me come sit close to her during play time when I felt intimidated and froze the whole first week of school. Or Mr. Michaels, who pitched to me after every practice the season I was promoted to play with the older kids. Or when the professor read my essay in freshman English and made me believe I had something worth saying.

sal·va·tion

sal-vāSH(ə)n/ *noun* THEOLOGY

1. deliverance from sin
2. preservation, redemption, or deliverance from evil
3. a source or means of being saved from harm, ruin or loss

To really understand salvation, we might need a crash course in systematic theology. Which means straightening out a few terms sullied about by street

thug theologians.

**Sin:** The act of separating yourself or someone else from the love they deserve; or acting with the understanding that you or others aren't deserving of love.

**Evil:** Anything that teaches or encourages you to sin.

Now, I'm not one of those relativistic, dreamy-eyed ultra liberal ministers who won't talk about sin or evil or pretend they're not real. They're very real. And, unfortunately, our failure to acknowledge their reality has only spread their ill effects.

But neither am I one of those brimstone toting, fear-mongering ministers who uses fear of sin and evil to try and make people good. I've had that tried on me and I can tell you it doesn't work.

I am one of those ministers who has been out in the world and has seen sin and evil up close. I've seen love withheld when it was a matter of life and death. I've seen those who allowed wounds to fester when it was well within their power to heal. I witness, more than my heart can bear, people's contributions to systems of oppression for the sake of their own ignorance, greed or privilege. Salvation is a revolutionary and courageous act of defiance by those who see the easy way of self-preservation and act on behalf of others, anyway. It is inventing words for "love," "care," and "acceptance," in a language that doesn't have them. It is speaking truth to power. It is exercising a preferential option for the poor, the hungry, the neglected, the wounded and those who have accepted despair as some "new normal."

You may wonder what salvation really means. Or whether you've earned that particular glory. But after a lifetime giving away love in the face of suffering, the question of glory will seem silly. You will know its meaning because you helped deliver it.

To the Glory of Life.

## Sunday Worship in April

Worship at 9 and 11 am

Theme for Month: ***Salvation***

April 3 **Abolition in the New Millenium**, Rev. Greg Ward with Moses Canales. What saves a person? What saves a people? What saves a nation? What saves a nation's soul. There are some who have been calling for a wall. In what seems so clearly to be a coercive tactic to incite xenophobia and react to / profit from a nation's ignorance and fear, we are called to go deeper and deeper into darker and darker places to understand a soulful response to immigration.

April 10 **Snake Song**, an Intergenerational Service with Merrin Clough, Zackrie Vinczen, Ann Riley, Carolyn Colbert and Sidney Camara-Hurtado. Are you alive? How do you know? Do you know what makes you really come alive? And are you continually on the growing edge of those experiences? In the book of Genesis, we find one of the most powerful and repeated stories in all the Bible. It's the story of Adam and Eve. We've all heard it. But have we ever heard it told from the point of view of the snake? Come to this Intergenerational Service to hear a take on the story we've likely not thought of before.

April 17 **A Religion Willing to Say "Hell No!"** Rev. Greg Ward with Carol Carlisle. Long ago in our Universalist heritage, there was a man named John Murray who said, "Give them not hell, but hope and courage..." It was a way of both denouncing a fear-based religious approach to Love AND learning to approach Love by modeling hope and courage. In this sermon, we will examine the hell created to scare us and the hell we create ourselves.

April 24 **The Rapture**, Rev. Greg Ward with Kathryn Jay. In the *Left Behind* fiction series, author and minister Tim LaHaye talks about the

Rapture. The Rapture, for those of us who haven't spent time in the south, or who don't listen to Garrison Keillor, is the apocalyptic accounting of the end times where good souls are swept up and taken to heaven and "non-believers" are "left behind." Where are Unitarian Universalists in the Rapture? In this exploration of apocalyptic thinking, we will endeavor to find our place in the end times.

## **Personal Theology**

Sunday mornings at 10 am in the Fireside Room

April 3 **Rev. Cathleen Cox**, Community Minister for UUCB, spiritual director, teacher, certified dream worker and workshop facilitator; 2002 recipient of the Margaret Fuller Award of UU Women's Federation. ***Who Stole Jesus?***

April 10 **Rabbi Harry Manhoff**, Congregational Rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom in San Leandro; author; lecturer at St. Mary's College; doctorate in the New Testament. ***The Siddur: Jewish Prayer, Its History and Interpretation.***

April 17 **James O'Hara**, author of *In the Land of Shiva*; former Catholic Brother and teacher whose life changed when he visited India and Nepal. ***Beyond Belief and Religion: A Seven-Year Journey in India and Nepal.***

April 24 **Rhonda Servin**, artist and writer; storyteller; book in progress titled *U: The Universe Chronicles*; UUCB member. ***The Universe: The Ultimate Superhero.***

*Personal Theology Program Committee:* Barbara Rockhold, Gloria Merrill, Anne Wardell and Barbara Norrish

# Family Ministry

Merrin Clough, Director of Family Ministry

In January, you may recall, we had a number of cross-generational conversations. We listened deeply to people of different ages as they spoke about what gifts, and challenges, our generational cohorts bring to this community. We began to put words to the hopes we have for building a future together. And I hope you dabbled a bit with reaching out to others who are younger or older than you. Through all of this we used the metaphor of building bridges.

But we all know that connecting across differences of age and experience takes more than just talking. The work of becoming who we hope to be together takes time and attention. That's why I'm reaching out to let you know that though this project is not in the spotlight, it's still full of life and love.

The ideas and inspiration that took root in early January didn't stop there. All of those special workshops, youth group sessions, worship services served as fuel for our youth adult team. In late January they went to the Youth Ministry Laboratory. This was a leadership development and goal setting retreat. The weekend was amazing, and our team came out of it with some clear goals:

- Build community within the youth groups through faith formation experiences
- Elevate youth voices through involvement with leadership teams, with a focus on leadership development
- Identify criteria for great youth adult partnerships and then equip the congregation to create them
- Gather youth input on the new safety policy and launch it

In our meetings since the retreat we've come to see that this is not quick, easy work. The kind of bridge we're building is a long-term project, it's a cultural

shift. So, we're starting off slow. Giving ourselves time to form as a team and to think deeply together.

In the meantime we hope you will continue to reach out to people of different ages. A true multi-generational community is a rich web of personal relationships. That is only woven by creating caring and trustworthy connections. So each time you are at church, find someone new to reach out to. Just that one simple bold move will make your life richer and our community more whole.

Our new comprehensive Child & Youth Safety Policy and the guidebook for hosting youth events are nearly done! Want to take a sneak peek? Join us on April 24, 12:30–2 pm. We will use a World Café model session to gather input from families and others interested. The Board of Trustees will make final decisions on the policy, and they value your input. The Family Ministry committee will develop procedures to implement the policy, including the youth event guidebook. We will also solicit input from the youth during youth group sessions on April 17 and 24. If you have any questions contact [Merrin Clough](#).

## Wonderful Wednesdays

Gather at 5:30 pm – Dinner at 6 pm – Vespers at 7 pm

Please join us for Richie Dawkins's wonderful catered suppers at church on Wednesdays. See "The Week Ahead" for the menus, the themes of the vespers services, and Wednesday night programs and meetings. The first Wednesday of each month is especially geared to families, but childcare is available every Wednesday by reservation ([childcare@uucb.org](mailto:childcare@uucb.org)).

**Reservations:** [Email](#) or sign the sheet outside the office. Deadline is 4 pm Monday.

Adults: \$15 (includes wine, light snacks, and dessert); \$18 at the door without

a reservation (new policy).

Family (two adults + two children, ages 12-18): \$35; children under 12 eat for free.

Vespers is an intimate half-hour worship service in the Fireside Room with meditative music, a reading, singing, and a story or homily. Come check it out!

## **President's Corner**

Deborah Schmidt

“We are beginning to see the reward for all of our work: a community ready to dance into our next shared ministry with energy, lightness and trust.” My last message to you ended with those words.

A few days after that column was submitted, the board participated in a visioning exercise focused on the question of what we most need in order to begin our next shared ministry. On the table between us was a collection of stones, shells, feathers, pinecones, and flowering branches. After silently considering the question, we each picked the object that best represented our thoughts. Then we drew pictures to amplify or extend these symbols. When we shared our thoughts with each other, a recurrent theme emerged. There was a remarkable degree of consensus that what we need is trust: openness to growth, change, evolution, possibility, a new relationship, a new dance.

Trust comes hard, especially when people have been hurt. We have learned that, in the aftermath of ministerial misconduct, congregations suffer from a lack of trust. We are not alone in this.

Trust comes from compassion, from knowing that people really are doing the very best they can. Trust makes it possible to assume good intentions, which may be one of the most challenging parts of our covenant.

And how do we catch ourselves not trusting? How do we teach, allow, encourage ourselves to open up in this way? At our last board meeting, Reverend Greg encouraged us to constantly ask ourselves, as we act, as we communicate, “Is this trust-building? Is this increasing or decreasing trust?”

I believe we can grow in trust. We *are* doing this. I can see the beauty that is possible and already emerging among, between and before us when we walk together in this spirit.

## **Program Council**

Joanne Wile, Convener

Barbara Cullinane has taken Jane Ramsey’s place as representative of the Pastoral Care program area.

Welcome, Barbara, and thank you, Jane, for your service.

The Program Council has been discussing policies on Sunday morning information tables and on how to make the Social Hall a more desirable, welcoming space for exploring what’s happening at UUCB.

Our exploration of possible changes to the Sunday morning schedule has continued, in conjunction with the Coordinating Team. We expect to see the 9:00 service seating moved up to the Chancel soon and both the early service and Personal Theology starting at 9:30 in the fall.

We will hold a summit for lay leaders on Saturday morning, May 14, including calendaring for the coming year.

## **Social Justice**

**Social Justice Council Meetings** – At the February meeting, SJC members were reminded that it was one year ago that the Council had its first potluck/meeting. Small group responses to “What’s Next for the SJC?” included publicizing applications for new Social Justice Projects that, after



being approved by the Council would be put before the congregation for a vote. Applications are due April 1<sup>st</sup> to [Nancy “Kelly” Kelly](#). Small groups’ suggestions for SJC “What’s Next” included: continue the Confronting Racism project; engage more with the congregation about the work we have been doing; go beyond our focus on African Americans and include others; involve youth and ask for their input; visit black churches and mosques; and question how/whether the environment/climate change might connect with Social Justice.

The March meeting included singing “Siyahamba,” personal Cuba experiences by UUCB’s Lorraine Schnurr and teenager Sidney Camara-Hurtado, and a debrief of our hosting the successful Contra Costa Racial Justice Summit Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to the many UUCB volunteers who helped welcome, register and feed about 100 attendees. We now have “Black Lives Matter” banners in the Atrium and in front of the church doors.

**The Confronting Racism: Literature, Film & Drama Contingent (LFDC)** – The LFDC was pleased to host Dr. Nikki Jones, Associate Professor of African-American Studies at UC Berkeley, as its first guest speaker on March 6<sup>th</sup>. She joined us for lunch to discuss her work and recent article, “The Gender of Police Violence,” published in *Tikkun*. The article outlines efforts being made by modern-day campaigns, such as #YouOkSis and #SayHerName, to “...amplify and center the experiences of black women and girls in local and national debates about police violence and reforms.” Dr. Jones is the author of *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence*, and a forthcoming book, *The Chosen Ones: Black Men, Violence and the Politics of Redemption*. [Camille Parker](#).

## **Upcoming Social Justice Events**

**Saturday, April 2**, 6 pm (doors open at 5) – ***Ghost Town to Havana*** – This film is a story about an Oakland inner-city youth baseball team that plays a Cuban team in Havana. It is a “heart-wrenching and hopeful documentary – a poetic love letter to inner-city mentors who give so much of

themselves to help others.” Good for families and free for all! **Some Oakland A’s players are coming and you’ll have a chance to win some tickets!** Tickets to event REQUIRED:

<http://gtthuucb2.eventbrite.com>

**Ceasefire Walks:** Friday nights in Richmond at 7, contact [Jane Eisenstark](#).

**Sunday, April 24**, is our annual **UNDIE SUNDAY**. As in years past, we will collect donations of packaged underwear as well as socks and pajamas for the residents of the GRIP (Greater Richmond Interfaith Program) Family Shelter. This tradition has been one of the many ways that UUCB has lovingly supported GRIP over the years. So please bring your gifts of packaged underwear, socks and/or pajamas for men, women, and children, and put them in the collection basket next to the Social Justice table. BTW, your donations don’t have to be limited to underwear – any new or like-new clothing for the GRIP residents would be most appreciated. Thank you.

**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](#).

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

**Good Neighbor for April: YES Nature to Neighborhoods**

([www.yesfamilies.org/](http://www.yesfamilies.org/))

”In partnership with nature, YES nurtures leaders who champion the wellbeing of our community. We believe that Richmond youth, adults, and families can lead healthy, connected lives; motivate change in their neighborhoods; and inspire a safe thriving community. YES strengthens the trust that builds community by 1) Building bridges between diverse communities, people, agencies, and the natural and urban worlds; 2) Creating safe spaces for adults and youth to develop skills for meaningful relationships and openhearted communication; and 3) Modeling the power of partnership

and relationship, and the value of the natural world.”

If you want to be added to the **Social Justice email list** contact [Jane Eisenstark](#).

## **From the Intern Minister**

Zackrie Vinczen

Are you saved? Have you found salvation? This month we will be exploring the theme of salvation in worship. It seems like a strange topic for a UU church, but I've come to understand why it's important for us to be able to talk about salvation, especially in Christian terms.

Recently, I preached at New Hope Church in Richmond. They asked me to come lead a Thursday night worship service in preparation for Holy Week. I was given specific scripture passages to speak on, but asked to interpret them according to my own understanding.

As I set out writing, I felt a bit out of my element, but soon I started to see how my UU understanding could be situated within the gospel story. I didn't focus on issues of Christ's divinity, or any miraculous wonders. I may have let one or two prophecies slip in, but, overall, I focused primarily on Jesus' teaching and the narrative of events.

Through narrowing my focus in this way, I was able to find a message within the gospel that fit into my theological framework, but that could be understood by others.

These are the sorts of conversations we need to be able to have, to reach across the denominational divides, and speak in terms that make sense to both groups. It's not an easy task, and is going to require enduring a bit of discomfort, but it's a step towards learning to truly love our neighbor as ourselves.

With this in mind, I'd like to encourage each of you to spend some time thinking about the theme of salvation this month, and discover new ways to translate your understanding into a language that can be understood in a variety of contexts.

## **Upcoming Events:**

I'm looking forward to our April 10<sup>th</sup> intergeneration service "Snake Song." This service will explore the genesis story of Adam and Eve from the perspective of the snake. If you'd like to take part in the enactment of the story, please let me know.

Also, for anyone who is able to make it to District Assembly, April 22-24 in Fremont (<http://www.pcdoua.org/>), I'll be leading a panel discussion exploring the concept of "calling" in a UU context. I'd love to see some of you there.

## **Ministerial Search Committee**

Stephanie Ann Blythe

Over three intense weekends your UUCB Ministerial Search Committee met with each of the three pre-candidate ministers. There was a meet-and-greet dinner on Friday evening. Saturday featured morning and afternoon interviews with the minister. We asked a lot of probing questions and they responded in kind with tough questions for us. On Sunday morning we were off to watch and listen to the pre-candidate preach at what is called a "neutral pulpit." Lunch at a nearby restaurant following the service was the final face time we had with the minister. We always had a few last questions to ask, and so did they. Now we have to decide which of these three can be our next minister and the one we present to you in May.

Let's recap how we got here. We read the ministerial records of nineteen

people. We exchanged websites with twelve who interested us. Five then got online video interviews with us, and we arranged with three to be pre-candidates.

In the first week of April we will decide who among the candidates we feel could be UUCB's next minister. If there is more than one, we will decide whom to ask first. On Thursday, April 7 at 9 am we will call that person. We hope to tell you on Sunday, April 10 that we have a candidate. However, we will not be able to tell you their name until they pass a background check, sign the letter of agreement with UUCB, and inform their current congregation of their departure.

We are also busy planning the candidating week activities. The specific dates depend on who our candidate is; the timeframe is sometime between May 7 and May 22. The candidate will preach at two Sunday services and the congregation will vote on whether to call this minister immediately after the candidate's second Sunday service. The candidate will be meeting with groups, committees, and others during the week in between. You'll be hearing more as we firm up the details.

Don't forget to follow our progress on the search committee's website at [uucbminsearch.wordpress.com](http://uucbminsearch.wordpress.com). If you have questions or comments [email us](#). Put "packet access" in the subject line and include your name in the text if you're requesting access to our information packet website.

## **Coordinating Team**

Lisa Maynard, Convener

As we move into spring and celebrate new growth in the world around us, we have exciting new growth and new beginnings at UUCB! Our beautiful terrace has been dedicated. Our newly formed Buildings and Grounds group has brought staff and lay leaders together in collaboration to plan improvements, both physical and



operational. Expect to see more children playing out in the newly fenced yard on weekdays; our new pre-school tenant, Pinecrest, begins operating on April 1. And the CT has been approached by the Ministerial Search Committee to begin scheduling meetings during Candidating Week in May—another exciting sign of new beginnings!

In the meantime, the CT continues to work on operating policies. Our church is fortunate to benefit from numerous gifts and bequests, and updated policies will allow us to administer those gifts more efficiently, in a way that honors the generous wishes of the donors. While we appreciate the flexibility of receiving unrestricted gifts (those that can be assigned to our general funds), we know that sometimes donors are inspired by the desire to support a specific program. Our Music Program is a good example of a program that has inspired great generosity. The Endowment Committee takes care of gifts and bequests to the Endowment Funds, and the CT is responsible for creating policies for accepting and administering other gifts to the church, including these restricted gifts. We have recently completed a draft Gift Acceptance policy; we expect to have it approved and in place this spring.

*The Coordinating Team meets on the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 3 to 5 pm. Our meetings are open to the congregation, but we occasionally change meeting date and place to accommodate member obligations and church operations, so if you're interested in attending, please contact [me](#) to verify our schedule and meeting place. Questions for the CT? Email [CT@uucb.org](mailto:CT@uucb.org).*

**We are MOVING FORWARD ... Building our Future! Make your pledge today!**

As of March 15, your Stewardship team reports we are at about 50% of our goal of \$529,000 – and by now you will have been able to see the actual numbers reported in The Week Ahead or in the Sunday services. Your connectors have been hard at work. However, there are some of you who

cannot be reached because **we are short on connectors! What to do?**

**If you have not been contacted, but would like to have a conversation, we hope you will join us on April 3 after the 11 o'clock service\*** to hear the latest financial news, give us feedback, and learn how your pledge will make a difference at this pivotal time.

We hope you can sustain your pledge and increase if possible. An incentive pool of over \$34,200 has been donated in honor of Lynne and John Cahoon, Jeanne and Ladd Griffith, and Raymond and Lucile Miles. This pool will match dollar for dollar any increase you can make in your pledge. AND new member pledges will be matched in full. To date 55% of pledges have been increased! Can you take a “step to the right” on the Fair Share Contribution Guide this year? [Contact us](#) with any questions.

\*P.S. Partner Church is serving Hungarian goulash at the snack table to give you sustenance for the conversation!

## **Building Project Management Team**

John Cahoon, Larry Nagel, and David Rockhold

The Terrace was officially dedicated after Sunday Service on February 28, and it was wonderful to see such a large crowd in attendance. It was especially gratifying that our senior committee member, John Cahoon, could attend the dedication. Since the dedication, the remaining light stanchions have arrived and have been installed and some landscaping has been planted. There still are some minor “punch list” items that are being attended to.

During a recent storm one dead Monterey Pine cracked at its midpoint and came crashing down on the fire road. We now are applying to Contra Costa County for an emergency permit based on “imminent danger” to have the most dangerous trees removed as soon as possible. We already have estimates on removing trees from the El Cerrito portion of the campus, and eight pines will be removed within a week or so. Our arborist also is working on the study

Contra Costa County is requiring to justify not replanting any trees on the campus. Because nesting season is now upon us, we may also need another biologist study to certify that we will not be disturbing any endangered nesting species.

Please bring any problems or concerns you may have to our attention immediately.

## **Partner Church Committee**

Stephanie Ann Blythe

Your Transylvanian Partner Church Committee has been kind of quiet lately, but we're still here! In fact there is stuff happening right away that we want you to know about.

It's GOULASH time again. We will be serving our famous gulyas (the Hungarian spelling) on Sunday, April 3, at the Snack Table following the 11:00 am service. All proceeds go to the Village Education Fund, which supports the secondary and higher education students of Homoródújfalú. Make your way to the Snack Table sooner rather than later on April 3. We always sell out!

You are invited to the Spring Transylvania Tea at Starr King School for the Ministry at 2:30 pm on Saturday, April 2. Rev. László Major, 2015-2016 Balázs Scholar, and Rev. Dr. Gabriella Lettini, SKSM Dean of Faculty, will engage in a lively dialogue on Unitarianism in today's world. The photography of Orsolya Major will also be featured. For more information, or to RSVP, please contact [Arliss Ungar](#). Suggested donation is \$25; proceeds benefit the Balázs Scholar program.

Want to learn more about gulyas and scholars and the work of the Partner Church Committee? Contact [Stephanie Ann Blythe](#) or [Anne Greenwood](#). We meet on the third Thursday of each month at 4:30 pm. All are welcome!



# Community Ministry

Rev. Cat Cox, UUCB Affiliated Community Minister

This week I taught a free teleclass, “Working with Impossible People,” that, not surprisingly, was well attended. Who hasn’t been annoyed from time to time with people who seem to create roadblocks to accomplishing projects that matter? And can any of us say that we haven’t been – from somebody else’s perspective – the “impossible person”?

Whenever and wherever we work together, our growing edges will show up, and we will sometimes make things difficult for one another, even when we don’t mean to. What can we do so that frustration doesn’t turn into resentment and withdrawal?

In my community ministry of spiritual direction, in which I offer individual counseling and congregational consulting, I help people dig deeper than their disagreements to discover what underlying needs and values really matter to each person in a stuck situation. This is a core process I introduced in my class this week.

The moment we can stop pushing for our own solution to a problem and focus on understanding what matters to another person, new possibilities open up. We might find the other person more willing to listen too! Understanding usually begets open-mindedness.

We are all participants in the shared ministry of this faith, and we are here to grow together, not to show up already perfect. Community ministry celebrates that, and invites each of us to discover the unique contributions we can make in and beyond these walls. Inevitably this involves working with others.

We’ll be most effective when we remember that even the most difficult people are trying to meet needs we can relate to. When we talk about what really

matters to each person and find the underlying common ground, we are on the way to turning tension into collaboration!

*Rev. Cat will be the Personal Theology speaker on Sunday, April 3. On Saturday, April 9, 9:30 am–1 pm, she will teach an interactive workshop at UUCB, “The Power of Conflict Resilience!” Register for the workshop with Lonnie Moseley, (510) 655-1444 or [email](#). See also Rev. Cat’s “Path of Joy” website, [revcat.net](http://revcat.net).*

## **Save May 7th for our Spring Gala!**

This major all-church fundraiser will include dessert and champagne, dancing to Soul Rising, a dance lesson with Roger Dillahunty just before the main event, and a silent auction including objects as well as events and services. Donation forms will be mailed soon and available at the member info table.

**NEWSLETTER ITEM SUBMISSIONS:** Submit announcements and articles by email to [beacon@uucb.org](mailto: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](mailto:beacon@uucb.org).