



Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the
Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley

February 2022 – Vol. 81, Issue 2

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Journeying Together

Rev. Dr. Michelle Collins

Our theme for the month of February is Widening the Circle. Well, that's our worship theme for February but in some ways it's been a theme running at UUCB for the past couple of years and a theme in Unitarian Universalism for even longer. We'll be talking about it from a number of perspectives in our worship services, so I wanted to touch on it from a more personal focused perspective here

Throughout each of our life journeys, we have encounters and experiences that may broaden our perspectives and our thinking in a variety of ways. This is especially true for identities and issues that you do not personally face, or those in your immediate circle. One of the things that I love about Unitarian Universalism is the openness to learning from our experiences and the willingness to let one's mind be broadened or changed. I can think of so many times in my own life when an encounter or a story or a relationship has challenged my thinking or assumptions in some fundamental way, and I think I've been largely open to those challenges (at least I hope I can say that!).

This month, as we're exploring these issues in worship, I encourage you to think back through those times of challenge for yourself. What were some of the shifts that you made? Did it take you a while to make them? What is it that might be calling out to you to hear or see now? As we seek to both get through challenges we ourselves may be facing as well as be better allies, it is important to not only keep stretching but also to keep asking ourselves what it is that we need to be

hearing or seeing. These times need this ever more, as we humans come up with more and more ways to marginalize and oppress one another. Our voices, the voices of Unitarian Universalism, are needed more than ever. Let us join our voices and our presence in and see what we can accomplish.

Blessings for the journey,
Rev. Michelle

Worship Services in February

Sundays at 11 am on [Facebook Live](#) and [YouTube Live](#)

Theme for February: Widening the Circle

February 6 – Draw the Circle Wide. Rev. Michelle Collins, preaching. Worship Associate Don Klose. In UU and here at UUCB we are working on widening our circle of concern in many ways. What are some of the ways that we can stretch, where do we need to, and whose voices might be left out? We'll explore these today.

February 13 – Many Voices, Many Stories. Rev. Michelle Collins, preaching. Worship Associate Bill Brown. Today we'll hear from the stories and experiences of folks from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds as we work to center these voices that are often marginalized.

February 20 – Celebrating Black Voices, a service designed by Lonnie Moseley, Helen Tinsley-Jones, Katie Lipka, Bryan Baker, and Rev. Michelle.

February 27 – Prophethood of All Believers. Rev. Michelle Collins, preaching. Worship Associate Dayana Claghorn. Unitarian Universalist theologian James Luther Adams penned the phrase “prophethood of all believers” when he called on us to embrace the prophetic calling of our faith. With the challenges going on in our world today, our prophetic witness and our prophetic work is more important than ever. What is it that we are each called to do, and what is it that we are called to do as a progressive religious community.

Virtual Coffee Hour immediately following worship on Sundays

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.

Click [here](#) to join us:
Meeting ID: 332 046 821
Password: 810131

Good Neighbor for February

[Collaborising](#). Collaborising's mission is to explore humanity through social and cultural exchange. We primarily focus on race equity work but we also have a community gardening project on the Richmond Greenway.

Special Events and Announcements

- **Elaine Miller is Board's Listening presence for February.** She can be reached at 510-528-2523 or elau.usher@gmail.com. Calls, texts, email welcome.
- **January 30, after Worship Service – Board of Trustees Candidates Forum**
Get to know the Board of Trustees Candidates in this informative and interactive forum during the Coffee Hour time slot. The candidates for the three, three-year seats are: [Michael Armstrong](#), [Beth Pollard](#) (incumbent), and [Pier Sun Ho](#). Click on each candidate's name to read their statement.
[Click this link to join us on Zoom](#)
- **February 6, from 12:30-2:30 – Literature, Film, Drama & Music Contingent.** As February is Black History Month, we will discuss the outstanding 2021 National Book Award Winner, *All That She Carried (The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake)*, by Tiya Miles: <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2021/11/16/all-that-she-carried-tiya-miles>. On Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84257017624> (camilleparker@comcast.net)
- **February 13, after worship – Awards, Canvass & Election Congregational Meeting.** Agenda and more details will be sent via email to members by February 3.
- **Scholarship applications now being accepted for General Assembly,** and we encourage youth, people of color, and other marginalized groups to apply. [Click here for more information on how to apply](#). Requests should be submitted by **March 31, 2022**.

- **Volunteer Needs:** When we do regather, we will need the help of a cadre of volunteers to manage the reentry process for Sunday prime time programming, i.e., Sunday service, Personal Theology and potential other church related meetings occurring before 3 pm. The task force is developing a document of the number and kinds of volunteers needed every Sunday. When the document is complete, it will be shared with the congregation with the hope that many will step forward to help us all regather easily and safely.
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Opening Task Force – Update

The Omicron variant of COVID has been surging throughout the country and the Bay Area. With this highly transmissible variant, infections have increased dramatically and the positivity rate has soared. As a result, many public health protocols have been strengthened to limit the spread and the increasing pressure on already stressed health care system and workers. The unvaccinated continue to be the most vulnerable population and the population most likely to need hospital care and to be at the greatest risk for serious complications, including death.

Thus UUCB's plans for regathering in person have been delayed. The task force will continue to monitor trends to assess when it will be safe for our congregation to regather joyfully and safely in person.

In the meantime, the best advice is to be fully vaccinated, including a booster, wear a mask, socially distance, especially in new environments with unknown persons, and wash hands. As masking experience and knowledge about easy and effective use has developed, N95, KN95 or KN94 masks are recommended by public health professionals as the best choices.

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OTF (Opening Task Force) Members: Patrick Cullinane (Chair), Sheldon Jones, Greg Lemieux, Lisa Maynard, Tess Snook O'Riva, ED, and Rev. Michelle Collins

Humanist Connections

Sundays, 1 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.)

February 6 – *What Is Information--Really?* Presented by Marcia Bates.

February 13 (following the Congregational Meeting) – Short topic discussion and topic selection with Ray Westergard.

February 20 – The Genetic Lottery. Presented by Harold Ogren.

February 27 – What is Non-Theistic Religion? Presented by Timothy Travis.

Zoom links are available under the "Calendar" listing on the UUCB website, and are included with each week's email notice about the upcoming discussion. For additional information contact Marcia Bates, mjbates@ucla.edu. *Group managers: Susan Singh, Ray Westergard, Al Kueffner, Lee Lawrence, Kris Homme, Anne Fitzmaurice.*

Personal Theology

Sundays, 9:30 am, Zoom

Happy Valentine's Day to all of you reading this message! Thanks to all of you who support the Personal Theology program we have two talented and thoughtful speakers schedule for February.

February 6 – Rev. Dr. Michelle Collins presents "Widening the Circle of Concern"

As many of you know, the Widening the Circle of Concern task force has been working for many months on this topic of widening the circle of concern for UUCB. Their dedication, thoughtfulness, and hard work has resulted in an [astounding report that is available on our website for congregants to read](#). Rev. Michelle will expand on this topic of Widening the Circle of Concern, which is also the theme for the month of February.

[Click here to join on Zoom](#)

February 27 – Rev. Dr. Jay Atkinson presents "From Physics to Metaphysics: A Seeker's Journey"

Using my own journey from physics to UU ministry as a springboard, I want to share some (always tentative) reflections on the “big questions” of human understanding —those perennial existential, theological, and moral conundrums that perplex us. Along the way I’ll touch on ideas about God, evil, love, interconnection, and the fundamental nature of reality.

[Click here to join on Zoom](#)

Stewardship Campaign Update

Our Resilient Community

In the time of COVID, as we search for a new minister, this year’s Stewardship campaign will be especially important. How well we respond to UUCB’s financial needs will be very important information for potential ministers to review in considering an application to be our next settled minister. The campaign will be securing pledge commitments for the operating budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023.

Our beloved and valued spiritual community continues to move forward with grace in these challenging times. With courage, service, fellowship, and hope, we have been steadfast in sustaining our community and carrying forward our heritage and our commitment to create loving community, inspire spiritual growth, and encourage lives of integrity, joy, and service.

We are very grateful for the members noted below who have volunteered to help conduct our campaign. Here is a quick summary of what to expect for this year’s campaign:

- On Feb. 26, there will be an early pledge event to help launch the campaign. More info will be forthcoming.
- From February to late March, as part of Sunday services, we will highlighting member, in-person vignettes speaking to their value and commitment, both in volunteer time and pledges, to UUCB.
- March 2022 will once again be the campaign month. The formal campaign will launch on Sunday, March 6, and Celebration Sunday will be Sunday, March 28.

Let us know if you have any questions about the campaign or if you have special talents you want to share to help the campaign at stewardship@uucb.org.

Your Stewardship Committee: Patrick Cullinane (Chair), Lynne Cahoon, Selene Fabiano, Ariel Smith-Iyer, David Roberts (Board Liaison), Rev. Michelle Collins, Tess Snook O'Riva (Executive Director).

From the Board of Trustees

Rev. Aija Simpson, aka Kerry's daughter.

We interrupt your regularly scheduled board report for a word from Rev. Aija Simpson, aka Kerry's daughter.

Hello friends! While my mom has a lot of skills, writing is not among them. However, one of the skills she does have in abundance is delegating. Those of you who did jobs at church you never could have fathomed volunteering for know what I mean. So somehow, I volunteered to write this, her final board message.

Most of you probably know that for six months of the pandemic my moms lived with my family. This helped my wife and me keep working while daycares were still closed in our area and it helped Kerry dote on her grandson (Cynthia was slightly more measured in her adoration).

Every Sunday my moms would set themselves up in the guest room to attend church, to light the flame from Harrisburg, PA and find out what was happening in the lives of their church family. While this was an important way they stayed connected to their beloved community, I saw the bond they have with UUCB represented on a slightly less worshipful occasion. Every month, and for more than one unexpected event, Kerry attended the board meeting. Nothing special there, except...I live on the east coast, so these meetings started at 10 pm. And they often went past one. Every time one was scheduled, I tried to convince my mom not to go. I told her that, as a minister, I wouldn't expect one of my board members to attend such a late meeting. I told her it was bad for her health. I told her she would be a grump the next day. And she agreed. And then she went to the meeting.

She went because she had made a commitment and she understands that churches are dependent on the commitments of all of their members. She went because she knew her fellow board members would miss her if she wasn't there, and we exist to support each other. But I think she also knew that she would miss it

if she wasn't there. Even though the timing was terrible, being at that meeting was important to her. It was the most concrete way that she stayed connected with her community, during a time where the usual ways we stay connected were no longer possible.

As a minister, I can tell you that the people who give the most to their churches are the ones that get the most from them. And since I'm not your minister, you know I'm not just saying that to get you to volunteer for something (I'll leave that to Kerry.)

Over the years I have watched both of my moms pour their hearts into UUCB. And I've watched this community love them, play with them and stand with them. My mom went to those 10 pm meetings because she knew it was worth it. What will you do?

In faith,
The other Simpson

Nominating Committee

Board of Trustees Candidates Forum – January 30, after Worship Service

[Click this link to join us on Zoom](#)

Get to know the Board of Trustees Candidates in this informative and interactive forum during the Coffee Hour time slot. The outstanding candidates for the three, three-year seats are: [Michael Armstrong](#), [Beth Pollard](#) (incumbent), and [Pier Sun Ho](#). Click on each candidate's name to read their statement.

The candidates will have the chance to elaborate on their written candidate statements and to answer your questions about serving on the Board. The new Board will be seated after the congregational meeting of February 13, 2021.

Voting for Candidates

Voting will be online and available to members starting January 30, with an alternative method available; see church communication on voting instructions. Even though this is an uncontested election, please show your support for these three wonderful members who are generously contributing their talent, time and dedication to our church community. Voting will end at the start of the congregational meeting on February 13.

The candidates were selected by the Nominating Committee, which is comprised of Victoria Bowen, Lynne Cahoon, Dayana Claghorn, Robin Cooper, Selene Fabiano, Max Jenny, Sandy Portillo-Robins and Terry Stokes, and convened by Board Vice President Helen Tinsley-Jones. For more information, email nominating@uucb.org, or call Helen at 510-334-1633.

Social Justice Council

Co-Chair's Message

February is African American History Month; to that end, please consider the following thoughts on the subject:

Google search results for “Black History Month”

*Black History Month is **an annual observance originating in the United States**, where it is also known as African-American History Month. It has received official recognition from governments in the United States and Canada, and more recently has been observed in Ireland, and the United Kingdom.*

And here are a few quotes from thoughts on the significance and relationship of the historical experiences of African Americans to others. Follow the links to the authors' complete theses:

American history is so much richer than the United States: Okalani Dawkins. [Watch on YouTube.](#)

There is no 'White culture': Richard Thompson Ford. [Read on CNN.com.](#)

Black history should not be segmented from how we think about American history. It should be baked into the curriculum. Ilyasah Shabazz. [Read on ELLE.com](#)

I had been taught, in school, through cultural osmosis, that the flag wasn't really ours, that our history as a people began with enslavement and that we had contributed little to this great nation. It seemed that the closest thing black Americans could have to cultural pride was to be found in our vague connection to Africa, a place we had never been.

Nikole Hannah-Jones. [Read on nytimes.com.](#)

Environmental Justice/Climate Project

Our work for a healthy earth and environmental justice project continues. We're looking at ways to engage the congregation in environmental and climate issues during virtual or in person coffee hours. With health care providers becoming more vocal about health issues related to climate and fossil fuels, planning for a forum on the climate health emergency is moving ahead. We have two bi-lingual, bi-cultural physicians ready to present to us on fossil fuels, climate and health, with some focus on local issues and collective actions we can take. Stay tuned for a date and for more information! Sheila Tarbet (starbet99@gmail.com)

Youth Spirit Artworks

Youth Spirit Artworks continues to make progress in its 100 Homes for Homeless Youth campaign. Executive Director Sally Hindman and Interfaith Organizer Reginald Gentry spoke at January's Social Justice Council meeting about the early stages of an initiative to create a Tiny House Village in Richmond, in collaboration with SOS Richmond (Safe Organized Spaces), a local homeless advocacy group. Their efforts include seeking the support of Richmond's Mayor Tom Butt, as well as civic and faith groups. I expect there will be many opportunities for the UUCB community to contribute to this project as it evolves. Look for further updates and feel free to contact me with questions or ideas: jim.acock@gmail.com.

Literature, Film, Drama & Music Contingent

We chose "Drama" as our kick-off for 2022! Those in attendance wrote great reviews for our play-reading of *The Mountaintop*, by Katori Hall, in which she reimagines Martin Luther King's last day on earth. Ms. Hall won the Olivier Award for Best New Play in 2010. The wonderful cast included drama students Lee Gregory as MLK and Janae Hood as the Angel of Death who visits him. Kudos to them, and to Don Klose, who was the Narrator, and to Lonnie Moseley and Cordell Sloan, for running the show – brilliant sound effects and all – on Zoom!

As February is Black History Month, we will discuss the outstanding 2021 National Book Award Winner, *All That She Carried (The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake)*, by Tiya Miles: <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2021/11/16/all-that-she-carried-tiya-miles>. All are welcome to **join us on February 6, from 12:30-2:30. LINK:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84257017624>. (camilleparker@comcast.net)

Help Wanted for Lunch at GRIP!

In addition to offering various supportive services, the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program, GRIP, serves meals every day to hungry, homeless, and other disadvantaged people in and around Richmond, including families living at GRIP. UUCB volunteers participate in this program by making sandwiches (usually from 10:15 to 11 am) and helping to serve lunch (from 11:30 to 12:45 pm) on the fourth

Tuesday of every month. We always have a greater need for sandwich makers than servers. If you want to participate in one or both activities, contact Ray Westergard at raywest2@sbcglobal.net.

Member's Musing: Why Read Aloud?

The [Read-Aloud Volunteer Program](#) began in 1995 at Downer Elementary School in San Pablo. That is where I read every Tuesday morning. This year I stay for two hours: two First Graders for one hour, and then two Kindergarteners. Both sessions are so delightful!

As a long-time Middle School teacher in Oakland and WCCUSD schools, I looked forward in retirement to being with younger students. I continue to experience joy every week in my fourth year in the program. The kids just light up when I go to their classroom to escort them to our special room. During that walk, they are usually bubbling with whatever are the latest goings-on for them.

Our Coordinator, Estela Banuelos, does an amazing job of setting up our tables and selecting books appropriate for each child. Even the newcomers with little exposure to English enjoy helping me by turning the pages. Every two weeks students get to choose a book to take home. And before vacations, extra books are sent home with them. The ritual of writing their names on a bookplate that goes on the inside cover is a joyful event. Altogether, it is a wonderful and satisfying experience. I am so grateful that UUCB church members have supported and participated in Read-Aloud over the years. There are still openings for Readers on Tuesday mornings, and perhaps at other times, as well. Check out the website for more information: <https://read-aloud.org/>. Bob Adams: adams1186@gmail.com.

Partner Church Committee

Stephanie Ann Blythe

February is often a time when we dream and plan our travels. Two years ago we were doing exactly that. Well, you know what happened next. It's 2022 and the crystal ball for travel to Transylvania is still cloudy. If the Omicron threat isn't bad enough, we now have Russia threatening to invade Ukraine. A quick look at the map shows Romania sharing a border with Ukraine. The potential areas of conflict would be more to the east, but one never knows in a region where ethnic boundaries don't always match political boundaries. We'll have to make our decisions real soon. I think you can see which way we're leaning, but who knows?



In the meantime, we'll just have to work harder on maintaining our relations with the people and church of Homoródújfalu from a distance. You can contact Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net to learn more about what's in store for 2022.

From the Executive Director

Tess Snook O'Riva, Executive Director



In and amongst all the administrative and operational things that staff do is an underlying goal: support the mission and vision of UUCB in everything we do.

As this congregation focuses on Widening the Circle of Concern this month, I reflect on how staff aligns their daily and ongoing decisions and processes through the lens of justice. We are dedicated to doing what we can to de-center whiteness in our processes, purchasing decisions, language, and documentation. We review our employee handbook and procedures asking if we are using inclusive language. For work parties, we put thought into how people of different physical abilities can contribute. We review the diversity statement and practices of our contractors and vendors, giving preferential treatment to minority-owned, green local businesses. We created a resource listing every resource for identifying black-owned businesses. Our landscaping discussions integrate our relationship with indigenous groups to be in better relationship with them and with the land. We are working on options for quiet spaces for people who are overstimulated. We will have a room designated for lactation. We order supplies for a wide range of first aid interventions and will be hosting trainings as soon as is feasible. We are working to make our spiritual home welcoming to people as they are; whether it's additional access options like ramps, assistive listening devices, large print/audio materials, translations, or just visual reminders of who we are and what we value, like flags. Throughout every conversation we ask, "what do we not know or see because of our own filters?"

At our staff retreat a few months ago, we populated a "care and feeding" document for staff, discussed our own concerns about reopening, identified some fun things about the different personalities represented, and authored a staff covenant. I am proud to say we have a group that is comfortable challenging each other and talking about hard subjects. We are well positioned to Widen our Circle with open arms, and we all look forward to the day we can welcome everyone back.

Ideas? Referrals? Feedback? Email me at ed@uucb.org.



Mailing address: 1 Lawson Road, Kensington, CA 94707

Telephone: 510-525-0302

Email: info@uucb.org

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