



Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the
Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley

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Journeying Together

Rev. Dr. Michelle Collins

At the start of a new year, it makes sense to think about the Roman god Janus. Janus is an interesting one depicting two faces, one looking backwards and the other looking forwards. It is a very good perspective to employ at beginnings, or rather a good two perspectives. As we start this new calendar year, there is much that we can observe as we consider our rear view mirror and there are many possibilities that lie ahead.

For our country and world as well as for our own individual lives as our journeys have woven through them, the past year (and past several) have been jam packed. The ongoing and varying impacts of Covid come to mind quite readily. It has been two years since the pandemic spread throughout the world and infused much of our everyday lives. In the beginning there was the sense that we just needed to get through it and then things could return to “normal.” The reality has come to be quite different from that as our world and along with it ourselves adjust to the ever changing challenges and “new normals,” as much as I hate that term. Some of the changes are on balance positive, some negative, really just a full mix. For the life of the congregation, there are obviously many adjustments and challenges, many of

which we are still waiting to implement as we are waiting for the safety to begin having services in person again. Looking backwards, there are many other things too, from personal challenges in each of our lives, continuing justice challenges and advocacy, ongoing effects of our accelerating climate change, and local and not-so-local happenings.

But the new year isn't just about looking back. Even more so, it's about looking forward informed by what we see behind us. Yes we're adjusting to many things, but what will they end up looking like? What challenges will UUCB face with reopening and what other adjustments will be needed? What will the ministerial search committee look like and how will the ministerial search go in this next calendar year (and the one after that)? As a focusing perspective for these questions as well as the way that we as UU's go about living our faith in the world, I would like to turn us towards mission. How do UUCB's mission and vision statements guide these questions and these choices, and what challenges does the mission offer? As a reminder, the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley is to create loving community, inspire spiritual growth, and encourage lives of integrity, joy, and service (<https://uucb.org/about-us>).

Worship Services in January

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

Theme: Living with Intention

Note: Services will continue to be online only (streaming to Facebook and YouTube) until further notice.

January 2 – Starting the New Year. Rev. Michelle Collins, preaching. Hey, New Year's resolutions anyone? Or failing that (because I always fail at those anyways) how can we start our new year with intention and meaning, making the most of our time as we can? Let's kick off the new year by exploring these and moving into it together.

January 9 – When History Is Hard to Hold. Rev. Michelle Collins, preaching. Worship Associate Deborah Schmidt. As we've taken a harder look at our history and our past, we've found parts that are less than comfortable to talk about and may be difficult to even bring up. What are some of these, and what can we gain by holding them up for ourselves and for others?

January 16 – Awakening. Rev. Michelle Collins, preaching. Worship Associate

Karen Elliott. This Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, we'll take some of his words and missives and ask what awareness and what actions are we called to in our world today. There is so much work still to be done.

January 23 – TBD

January 30 – Building Our Own Theology. Rev. Michelle Collins, preaching. Worship Associate Jason Russell. Unitarian Universalism's 4th principle states that we affirm "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning" for each of us. It is a fundamental part of our faith, and I expect a part that drew many of us here. Our own truths matter, and there isn't a creed or belief system that UUism compels us to agree to. To me, it's one of the most beautiful things about our faith. We'll explore what it means today.

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 January

[Read Aloud Volunteer Program](#) is a relationship-based program that fosters in children the joy and love of learning through reading and story-telling. Their goal is to build a structure of volunteers to support and improve reading outcomes for children in under-resourced communities in Richmond, CA and surrounding areas.

Announcements

- **Board Listening Presence:** Kerry Simpson, maryann.simpson@gmail.com
-

Opening Task Force – Update

Indeed we are a community of resilience. Once again we have paused our regathering in person as we determine the best circumstances for us to come together. Acting on the decision by the Board of Trustees to require proof of vaccination before inaugurating in-person Sunday service and prime-time programming ([click here to read the announcement](#)), the Opening Task Force (OTF), with the capable leadership of OTF member Lisa Maynard, has been organizing opportunities for members to share their vaccination proof. Zoom meetings are one option. If this option works for you, contact planning@uucb.org to sign up for a Zoom session. Watch for announcements about other in-person opportunities to share your vaccination information.

Thanks to the over 60 members who at this writing have verified their vaccination status. As more members take this step and we navigate the appearance of the Omicron variant along with the Delta variant and the winter surge of COVID as more gather indoors, we hope our continuing compliance with public health protocols of masking, physical distance, washing of hands and, for those who can be vaccinated, vaccinations will lead us to the time when the congregation can meet in person.

Masking has proven to be one of the most effective public health protocols in fighting the virus. The CDC offers advice about masks and how to select, properly wear, clean, and store masks – [Improve How Your Mask Protects You | CDC](#) and [Your Guide to Masks | CDC](#).

Safety protocols remain in place at the church and signage upon entrance to the main building helps to remind us of the importance of honoring those protocols. We rely on everyone in our community to stay at home when they have any symptoms of contagious disease, and we are glad that technology makes it possible for us to keep our connections even when physically separate.

As Desmond Tutu noted, these hard times can knit us more closely together. We hope to have navigated the holiday season successfully so we can gather safely and happily together later this month or in early February. As Rev. Michelle reminds us on Sundays, we move forward in challenging times to the church community and the world we dream about with Courage, Service, Fellowship, Hope and Joy.

All good wishes for a healthy and happy 2022.

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

Social Justice Council

Co-Chairs' Messages

From Sheldon Jones:

The Social Justice Council's December meeting was taken up with the interviewing and selection of Good Neighbor nominee organizations for 2022. What transpired was the reveal of a universe of truly wonderful and exciting work in diverse areas of human need from healthy food to family support, and from housing to legal aid. Some efforts went beyond need and aimed for the empowerment of people as renters, immigrants, parents, or partners. What many anticipated would be a chore of listening and deciding turned into an exploration of the unstoppable need to make human connection through care and support. It was hard to choose!

For the holidays and the New Year, may all be comforted, healthy, and 2022 filled with creative ways to grow and connect, as we negotiate rapidly transforming realities. Less virus and more community! Less trepidation, more confidence and joy! (sejones1950@gmail.com)

From Natalie Campbell:

At our December Social Justice Council meeting, we heard from amazing local non-profits, and took a vote to choose who our 12 organizations would be. Here are the 12 clear winners! Our Good Neighbors for 2022:

- Berkeley Food Pantry
- The Berkeley Food and Housing Project
- Collaborising
- Contra Costa Family Justice Center
- East Bay Sanctuary Covenant
- GRIP (always our October Good Neighbor)
- No More Tears
- Read-Aloud Volunteer Program
- Urban Tilth
- Women's Cancer Resource Center
- Yes Nature to Neighborhoods
- Youth Spirit Artworks

I feel so lucky to be able to be a part of this program. I am always inspired by what local organizations are doing to help the community. Please make sure to tune in on the first Sunday of every month, to see and hear representatives from each non-profit speak about what they are doing, how they will use our funds, and how you

can help, as well! (nataliehcampbell@yahoo.com)

Religious Education Was in the House!

Some of our wonderful young people from UUCB's Religious Education Program were videotaped in the sanctuary, lighting the kinara candelabra candles and reciting the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa (which means "First Fruits.") The first candle, lit by Paloma Duggan, was part of the December 26 Sunday sermon. The Principle is UMOJA, for Unity. The other six candle lightings, by Langston and Katie Tinsley-Righton; Owen Rosales; Kiran and Naomi Smith-Iyer; Annika Jensen; and Kibriya Cooper-Malek, will be displayed on our website (www.uucb.org) for the remaining six days of Kwanzaa. These Principles are: KUJICHAGULIA (Kuji) for Self Determination; UJIMA for Collective Work/Responsibility; UJAMAA, for Cooperative Economics; NIA, for Purpose; KUUMBA for Creativity, and IMANI, for Faith.

In addition to the very supportive parents and grandparents of these youngsters, Lonnie Moseley, Cordell Sloan, Suzette Anderson-Duggan, and Carol Carlisle made this lovely event happen! (camilleparker@comcast.net)

Environmental Justice/Climate Project:

Seven of us are meeting regularly to support our work for a healthy Earth and a healthy climate for all. We're planning to engage the congregation in environmental and climate issues during virtual or in-person coffee hours. We're also planning a presentation by Bay Area physicians for early 2022 to highlight local health risks related to climate change. Many of these risks are higher in our communities located near fossil fuel facilities and major transportation corridors. Health care providers have become more vocal about these health issues and are speaking out. We're looking forward to finding a date for their presentation, and we're grateful they're willing to share their knowledge and experience. Stay tuned! (Contact Sheila Tarbet at starbet99@gmail.com for more information or to join us.)

Literature, Film, Drama & Music Contingent

The December 5 meeting of the Literature, Film, Drama and Music Contingent was all women!

Not surprising, as the book under discussion was inspired by *Little Women*, which most of us grew up with. But, in Bethany C. Morrow's *So Many Beginnings: A Little Women Remix*, the March sisters are African-American, just out of enslavement with the Civil War still going on, working to build the Freedman's colony of Roanoke Island, North Carolina. The book is more of a sketch than a complete novel, intended for teen-aged readers, but carefully included are serious issues of identity, opportunity, overcoming the past and building a new future. The strength of the family, their spirit and high moral awareness are all very true to the original, but the difference of perspectives towards their historical situation brings up challenging

ideas that we all found well worth talking about. (Christina Creveling,
dedec@sonic.net)

Whites Opposing White Supremacy

WOWS (Whites Opposing White Supremacy) has been going through a transition. In August, the group voted to become open to anyone who wants to attend. We are considering new names and clarifying our mission, as well as our relationship with the People of Color Caucus, our original partners in challenging racism. While we work on our Mission Statement, our temporary name is Working to Overcome White Supremacy.

WOWS' January meeting will take place on Sunday, January 23, from 12:30 to 2 pm. All are welcome. (Julia Rogers, jlundyr@gmail.com)

Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP)

GRIP offers free Souper Center lunches for hungry, homeless, and other disadvantaged people in and around Richmond. UUCB continues to participate in this very worthwhile and enjoyable activity with fourth Tuesday lunches. There are two parts to our process: We make sandwiches, usually from about 10:15 to 11 am, and then serve the food from 11:30 to 12:45 pm. You can choose to do one or both activities! If you are willing to occasionally help us with this project, please contact Ray Westergard at raywest2@sbcglobal.net . *And many thanks to those of you who so generously donated to our Winter Warmth Drive for GRIP!*

Member's Musing

I like the United States of America.

I like the way we all live without fear.

I like to vote for my choice, speak my mind, raise my voice,
Yes I like it here.

I am so lucky to be in America.

And I am thankful each day of the year.

For I can do as I please, 'cause I'm free as the breeze,
Yes I like it here.

I like to climb to the top of the mountain so high,

Lift my head to the sky,

And say how grateful am I

For the way that I'm living, I'm working, and giving,

And helping this land I hold dear.

Yes I like it, I like it, I like it here!

(Author Unknown)

[Click here for Camille Parker's rendition of this song.](#)

I learned this growing up; my aging memory is foggy as to where. I thought it might have been while attending the white high school I helped to integrate in Chicago, in 1958. But I remember happily practicing this song with my sister with great gusto, which would mean it was for a choir, which would have been the AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Church. And, if this is correct, how ironic!

Now, I feel terribly saddened by these words that are ingrained in my memory; depressed, especially because I feel that we might have gotten “there,” with the words to the song ringing true. But, a Black man was elected to lead this Nation, and all hell broke loose upon his departure from the White House. Now, with all that is going on in these United States and around the world, I am having trouble keeping hope alive.

The intentional demise of the right to vote, for people of color; the likely end of Roe v Wade, as we’ve known it; folks not wanting their children to know the truth about our Country’s history; a murderer being courted by some conservative members of Congress to join them; the possibility that their leader may be re-elected! The fact that his appointee oversees the United States Postal Service – and is slowing down the mail in communities populated by people of color; the viruses that continue to plague us, for various reasons, including, sadly, people refusing to get vaccinated because of their politics.

While it is hard to remain positive about our Country’s future, I am truly grateful for the work being done at UUCB; particularly by the Social Justice Council – doing what we can to make a difference! As the Reverend Dr. Robin R. Meyers said: “Social Justice churches will thrive!” And, as Janai Nelson, newly-elected Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., said: “We are fighting for the soul of this Country.”

May it be so; and, may Democracy survive!
Camille Parker, Ed.D.

From the Board of Trustees

Bill Brown

Happy New Year Everyone!

It’s that special time of year, where we make resolutions towards being our better selves. This year, I am resolving to spend more time gardening. It does not seem

like much, but it is something that I enjoy and will be making time for this year!

I think we as a congregation need a New Year's Resolution too... I think we should make 2022 the year we work together to find a solution for the F-word. I know, the F-word is a sensitive topic, and many of us are passionate about the F-word. The F-word has brought a lot of joy to our congregation! Some members have been using the F-word for over 50 years and others feel we should not be using the F-word at all. We are divided. But the longer we avoid the F-word, the more difficult it becomes for us to use it.

I know children love using the F-word, and we as a congregation were thrilled the F-word was bringing them so much joy! We've, however, reached a point where children (or even large groups) just can't get permission to use the F-word anymore. It sucks, but that's just the reality for the F-word currently.

Could children use the F-word in small groups with their parents or a small group ministry? Yes. But even under ideal circumstances, it will take a significant amount of funds to make the F-word usable, marketable, and accessible in that situation. It is not impossible, but it will be difficult.

The F-word has been around for a while and is in serious need of maintenance and repair to remain relevant to our congregation. We've been avoiding talking about the F-word as the method of maintaining our relationships to each other, but this sets us up for relational pain in the future. If the F-word is vital to our congregation, our mission, and our spiritual needs, then we need to come together as a congregation, and commit our resources towards making the F-word usable. If it's not, then we should look at other options.

2022 should be our year to act on Freestone! We need to evaluate the situation in covenant, create a plan, and implement it as a congregation, together!

– Bill

Stewardship

David Roberts

Stewardship, pledge, canvass, funding, donation campaign (whatever we call it), the joy – and challenge – of funding our church is changing. With so many of our programs and activities impacted by COVID and changed routines, our annual campaign is changing, too. We are looking for a few more good people to help us organize and manage that change. This year we have new donation software that Tess and her team guarantee makes much lighter work for the many hands working on this vitally important effort.

For now we are calling it the Stewardship Team and we have recruited six members to date. We are looking for four or more additional members to help organize and manage the campaign. Please consider joining Don Klose, Patrick Cullinane, Selene Fabiano, Smiley Nelson, Lynne Cahoon and David Roberts to assist in helping make the change.

Contact Dave Roberts at davidbobs1@gmail.com or call at 510-444-1173 to learn more!

From the Treasurer

Lenore Ralston

Summary:

As we reach the end of this calendar year, we have much to be grateful for: I am grateful for all the new faces who have joined us. And I am deeply grateful to those of you who have held our church together as we have changed ministers, plunged into campus repairs, morphed into the virtual world, tended to our values, welcomed talented and energetic new staff, and moved through COVID despite grief, loss, and personal and logistical impediments.

State of Our Finances

We have benefited from a historically robust stock market. For 2021 our Total Rate of Return as of this writing has been 26.28% and our Composite Gross has been 24.3% (source UUCEP Oct. 2021)

In actual numbers, our Endowment has almost doubled, despite drawing down \$525K of Board-directed and Congregation-authorized funds for building maintenance and using \$150K to replenish our TRNAs (earmarked funds that are temporarily restricted until their use-time is triggered). In plainer speaking, in January 2018 our General Board-designated Endowment was valued at \$1,194,400. As of October 31, 2021, it was valued at \$923,241 – a difference of only \$271,159.

Further, in summer, 2020 we received one extraordinary \$250,000 bequest from former Congregant Ann Lane! This one gift has returned more than \$57,000 in investment earnings.

While inflation rates have eroded some of the buying power of these values (over the last 12 months, the San Francisco Bay Area CPI-U increased 3.8 percent – https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_sanfrancisco.htm), the good markets have preserved the intrinsic buying power of our Endowment.

Major Pulse Points:

Pledges: Pledges are UUCB's major source of income. Our wonderful Congregants have been steadfast and generous! Our pledgers are honoring their promises. We have taken in \$42,631 more than expected as of this month. Please keep it coming!

School and Cottage rentals: Our next reliable and much appreciated stream of income comes from our rentals. We received \$29,100 per month, from our pre-school and our cottage.

Endowment earnings: Our combined Endowments are valued at \$1,734,193 and are continuing to increase. As of October 2021, UUCEF reports year-to-date a combined net composite interest rate of 8.8%.

"Angel" gifts: We have received unexpected gifts in excess of \$120,000 – what UUCB used to call "angel" gifts coming from long-standing members who dug into their pockets to help us with all the infrastructure repairs we are doing. We received unexpected help for rafter tails, cottage renovations, and HVAC.

Some Cautions: We always need to be vigilant financially. There will be a market correction. Inflation may not yet have plateaued. We need to nurture and cherish our staff, lay leadership, our interim minister, and one another!

I have never been more excited to be at UUCB! I feel a humble pride in all we have collectively accomplished!!

Happy Holidays!!

Lenore

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.)*

Here are the topics we voted on for for the month of January. Unless we hear otherwise from the church, we will continue to meet on Sundays 1:00-2:30 pm on Zoom. All the Zoom links can be found in the UUCB Calendar. I will also send out the usual reminders.

January 2 – Gail Morrison: Consciousness: Who or What Has It?

January 9 – Ray Westergard: Topic Selection and Short Topic Discussion

January 16 – Diane Rusnak: How to Relate to Friends or Family with Dementia

January 23 – Gabi Kramer: Wintertime Memories

January 30 – Don Anderson: Bioethical Issues of Abortion

Zoom links are available in The Week Ahead, 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 Holiday to all members and friends of UUCB. Thanks so much for supporting the Personal Theology program at UUCB for these many years. Your support, suggestions, and participation are what make this program so special and long-lasting. Lonnie Moseley and I hope that all of you have a healthy, safe, and happy year in 2022.

So far, we have one presentation scheduled for Personal Theology in January. This program will be on Zoom. We will keep you posted if any more programs are planned.

January 23, 2022 9:30 am – Our dear friend Rabbi Harry Manhoff will be joining us. Here is the description that he sent for his selected topic: This year I would like to speak about "**Care First, Jail Last**," an Alameda interfaith coalition to take some money from the Sheriff's jail budget and redirect it to community mental health programs and facilities. I will present the Jewish view of mental health services versus incarceration.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9137136420>

– Anne Wardell

Partner Church Committee

Stephanie Ann Blythe

In case you think 2020 or 2021 have been times of upheaval, look for big changes in 2022. The International Council of Unitarians & Universalists and the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council have voted to dissolve and work towards a new international movement. But not to worry; our partnership between UUCB and the people and church of Homoródújfalu remains unchanged and ready to move forward. Why the change at the top is occurring can be found in [this document](#).



We members of UUCB's Transylvanian Partner Church Committee are very appreciative that the Social Justice Council has voted for a \$1000 grant to the committee and that it is exploring ways for on-going financial support. Thank you very much! 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. **Boldog új évet!** That's Happy New Year in Hungarian, as you might guess.

From the Executive Director

Tess Snook O'Riva, Executive Director

I've been talking to a lot of people lately about the long-term effects of this pandemic. For those who have "long haul Covid," the effects of chronic fatigue, inability to focus or remember things, and ongoing shortness of breath, among other symptoms, are a regular experience without a certain end date or cure. The health ramifications are far-reaching, and studies will be conducted for years about the global health effect this has had.



Covid has screwed up people's health goals and routines generally. Many people have gained weight, lost muscle, and are still lethargic. Add to that the stress/emotional eating, the shifting requirements for gyms, and the weather, and the general attitude seems to be, "I just want to get through the holidays. I can go back to being healthier in the new year." I am definitely no different. And that de-stressing glass of wine was a little *too* often.

What is more concerning for me is the mental and cultural shift. Pre-pandemic I had been seeing so many more opportunities for people to have the physical touch they crave in codified, safe environments. Hugs were becoming more normal, nonsexual cuddle parties were a thing, mental health was becoming an accepted topic of conversation, and we were all working on learning to accept where someone is in each moment. It felt like progress.

Now, all hugging is a negotiation. Vast numbers of people are still not going out. If someone isn't vaccinated, even for a medical reason, they are barred from events. If you have an event without asking for proof of vaccination, people won't attend for fear that an unvaccinated person might compromise their health, regardless of how vaccinated they are. There seems to be an uptick in "otherness" and "stranger danger." It saddens me to think we might have backtracked.

When I saw the January theme of Living with Intention, the first thing I thought of was the annual tradition of New Year's Resolutions. In addition to our health and personal goals, I would encourage us all to find ways to commit (or recommit) to NOT letting fear rule our relationships. That we be honest about our needs, without pushing people away. That we reach out and put time and effort into redefining our connections and negotiating our comfort zones so that no one is left out. And most of all, I hope, no I pray, that these efforts don't diminish by March...when my free trial gym membership expires.

Hugs and elbow-bumps to all, and may we all have a happy and healthy New Year!



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