

December 2022

Theme: Wonder

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Vol. 81 #12

The mission of this church is to create loving community; inspire spiritual growth; and encourage lives of integrity joy, and service.

Journeying Together

Rev. Dr. Michelle Collins

The holiday season is back upon us. In typical years, it can be a challenging time for many, and that has gotten exacerbated since 2020. Not only can it hold an onslaught of holiday events and a celebration of rampant consumerism, but we can also be met by demands from family, friends, and traditions. The past two holiday seasons during Covid added in the experience of disrupted traditions and the fact that many folks have not seen many of their friends and family in a long time. Travel is still not without risk and can be frightfully expensive. Many traditions have either been suspended or at least changed in the past few years, and many have died who may have been central to families or to certain traditions. I join many in wishing for things to simply return to “normal,” although we all well know that the normal of yesterday will never be returned to.

But I am not meaning to simply share thoughts that are downers. I share them to remind us of them and that we can still find joy and gratitude despite these. I recently shared my holiday motto: “greater happiness through lower expectations.” What it’s really about is naming what brings you joy and taking responsibility for your own well-being. I won’t get to see my daughter this Christmas, but I’m enjoying hearing about her joy and what she’s looking forward to for the holiday. I’m thinking about my favorite flavors and favorite movies for the season and making plans to experience those. I hope that you can reflect on what brings you joy and make sure to incorporate those things into your holiday season.

Through the entire season, I also hope that we can all stay safe and healthy. Normal now means thinking about health safety, and there are three diseases running around for these holidays along with plenty of extra gatherings and crowds. One of my favorite bloggers had some good suggestions for health safety during the holidays this past month (<https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/thanksgiving-week-friendly-reminder>). Please, do what you need to do to stay healthy as well as to be joyous.

Wishing you a happy holiday season,
Rev. Michelle



December Services

Sundays 11 am

In Person, [Facebook Live](#) and [YouTube](#)

December 4

Saying No Is Saying I Love You

December 11

Wonder and Awe

December 18

Holiday Pageant

December 21

7 pm Winter Solstice

December 24

5 pm & 10 pm

Christmas Eve Services

December 25

The Gifts of Christmas

RE Dates

Dec. 4 & 11

Coffee Hour

Sundays at Noon

In person in the Social Hall
and/or on the Terrace

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Sundays at 9:15 am in the Safir Room and on Zoom

December 4 – Rev. Michelle Collins presents “On Grief.” UUCB’s interim minister, Rev. Michelle, will talk about the grief that the stressful holiday season can stir in many of us.

<https://zoom.us/j/99027634430>

Youth and Children’s Choir Rehearsal

Sundays at 10 am

The Choir is open to all children and youth, ages 5 ½ and up. Prior musical experience is not required. We rehearse in the Meditation Room (below the Sanctuary) or on Zoom. We help lead the Sunday worship service once or twice per month. Occasionally we participate in other music events. We’d love to have you join us!

Humanist Connections

Sundays at 1 pm, usually on Zoom

Dec. 4 – How Shall We Determine What Is Legal? Paul Ulbrich

Dec. 11 – Topic Selection for June and Short Topic Discussion. Ray Westergard

Dec. 18 – Hawkins' Theory of a Thousand Brains. Presented by Marcia Bates. Safir Room.

Dec. 25 – No Meeting.

Holiday Volunteer Opportunities

Dec. 2-4: Set up and clean up for the Holiday Fair

(annharlow@pacbell.net)

Dec. 10: Make holiday bags & cards of remembrance

(bb75c87@gmail.com)

Dec. 11: Transport Food Drive donations to Richmond Emergency Food Pantry (arielwest@yahoo.com)

Dec. 12: Winter Celebration Tinsel Labyrinth

(carol.carlisle@gmail.com)

Dec. 24: Ushers for 10 pm candle lighting

(indiandance@earthlink.net)

Special Events

Dec. 2 @ 7–9 pm

All-Church Tree-Trimming Party and Cookie Exchange

Dec. 4 @ 10 am–2 pm

Holiday Fair

Dec. 10 @ 1–4 pm

Holiday Bags and Cards of Remembrance

Dec. 11

Annual Food Drive
Hanukkah Celebration Chapel

Dec. 18 @ 4 pm

Handel’s Messiah Sing-Along

Dec. 21-31

Winter Celebration Tinsel Labyrinth

Dec. 21 @ 7 pm

Winter Solstice Service

Dec. 24 @ 5 pm & 10 pm

Christmas Eve Services

Good Neighbor in December

Urban Tilth inspires, hires, and trains local residents to cultivate agriculture, feed the community, and restore relationships to land to build a more sustainable food system, within a just and healthier community.

<https://urbantilth.org/>

Announcements

Sing-Along Messiah is Back!!!

A poster for Handel's Messiah Sing-along. The title "Handel's Messiah" is at the top in a decorative font. Below it, "Sing-along" is written in a simple font. The central image is a large, ornate, golden star with intricate patterns. Text on the poster includes: "December 18, 2022", "Sunday, 4:00pm", "in person at UUCB, 1 Lawson Road Kensington, CA", "also via Livestream", "Orchestra and chorus conducted by Bryan Baker", "www.uucb.org", "All singers are asked to wear a mask and be symptom-free", "\$20, \$15 for students at the door or online", and "Scores available to borrow".

December 18,
2022
Sunday, 4:00pm
in person at
UUCB, 1 Lawson Road
Kensington, CA
also via Livestream

Orchestra and chorus
conducted by Bryan Baker

www.uucb.org

All singers are asked to
wear a mask and be
symptom-free

\$20, \$15 for students
at the door or online

Scores available to borrow

After 2 years, the Sing-along Messiah returns in person! And at an earlier time, 4:00. Once again, you can come enjoy the evergreen wonders of Handel's masterpiece. With orchestra and soloists, and the audience singing the chorus numbers and a number of solos, we'll gather for the joy of making music together. All of Part 1, and selections from parts 2 and 3. Hallelujah! Singers need to be symptom free and wear a mask. UUCB's large sanctuary has an excellent air exchange system. A livestream option will be available. Tickets at the door and in advance: \$20 (\$15 students). No one turned away for lack of funds. Visit uucb.org for tickets.

Board Listening Presence: Dave Roberts – email davidbobs1@gmail.com or call 510-444-1173.

Ministerial Search Process

We are officially in search!

November opened on a high note with the Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT) workshop. Your participation in person and online made this a wonderful and meaningful opportunity to expand our imagination about the identity and gifts our future minister might possess. Some takeaways from participants were: *"The workshop as a whole broadened my sense of who our next minister could be,"* and *"I was particularly struck by the human habit of reducing people to a 'single story'—I've seen that kind of thinking in my own mind."*

Buoyed by the momentum of the reflective responses from the survey, focus groups and BCT, **the search committee is happy to announce that we are officially in search!** As part of the search process, congregations must submit an extensive history to the UUA in the form of a [Congregational Record](#) and [Documents Packet](#). These provide a glimpse to prospective ministers of who we are: accomplishments, operational and governance structure, challenges, and aspirations. A heartfelt thank you to all of you who assisted us in assembling these massive records. We could not have achieved this milestone without your engagement, deep knowledge, and gracious sharing of your time!

December will be a slow month as a search committee as we gear up for **the next phase of the search: getting a list of candidates from the UUA Transitions Office on January 2nd**. We cannot wait! We know you join us in sending positive thoughts into the ministerial universe as candidates review our materials. Wishing you a joyful and safe holiday season filled with the warmth of family and community.

Opening Task Force (OTF) Update

1,200 & 751 – Risk Level?

In the week of Nov. 14, Alameda County had 1,200 new Covid cases and Contra Costa County had 751. Although community risk levels in both counties remain low, Covid is still with us and thoughtful precautions remain the order of the day. So what should we do, especially as we enter the winter and holiday season and more, larger gatherings?

- Wear a quality, well-fitting mask, especially in high-risk situations and in the presence of vulnerable persons.
- Get the updated booster and flu shots. They can be taken at the same time. Covid vaccinations and boosters are 90% effective at preventing hospitalizations.
- At church, honor our commitment to keeping the church accessible, inclusive, and safe for all by always wearing your mask in the Sanctuary, and also in the Fireside and Safir Room, where more intense and prolonged exposures, e.g., as in close seating, meetings, can degrade the ventilation protection placing vulnerable people at higher risk and detracting from inclusiveness. Masking is also required in the Meditation Room.
- Respect the lanyard choice and masking of your fellow members and friends as you enjoy the optional mask environment of the Atrium and Social Hall.

Vaccine Policy and Upcoming Messiah and Christmas Activity

We will present a recommended change to our current vaccination policy at the Dec. 7 Board of Trustees meeting. The current policy and considerations can be viewed at [Vaccination Policy - Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley \(uucb.org\)](https://www.uucb.org/vaccination-policy). Trends in Covid infections and the development of vaccines and boosters and other protocols have called for a review of existing policy to be consistent with current realities.

Check In at the Church

The check-in procedure at the church entrance is being reviewed to improve the ease and efficiency

of the process. You may have noticed that the procedure has been moved to the Welcome Table. The objective is to continue to capture valuable participant information, including visitor contacts, in the least intrusive and most timely manner.

Meeting Guidelines for Church Group Leaders

Supporting the church's commitment to hybrid meetings for all public-facing activity to ensure maximum access and participation, the task force is reviewing guidelines for church groups to support such hybrid meetings. The guidelines will address responsibilities for organizing with staff and conducting hybrid meetings.

If any questions or comments, contact the OTF at planning@uucb.org.

Mask Requirements per Room

Chrysalis Room

Current Policy 11/7/2022: Masks required in this room to be inclusive of vulnerable populations. Ventilation status: Poor
To increase ventilation, open windows & doors.

Meditation Room

Current Policy 11/7/2022: Masks required in this room to be inclusive of vulnerable populations. Ventilation status: Fair
To increase ventilation, open windows & doors.

Safir Room

Current Policy 11/7/2022: Masks required in this room to be inclusive of vulnerable populations. Ventilation status: Good
To increase ventilation, open windows & doors. To increase ventilation but conserve heat, turn on both heat pumps using remote on wall.

Fireside Room

Current Policy 11/7/2022: Masks required in this room to be inclusive of vulnerable populations. Ventilation status: Excellent
To increase ventilation, open windows & doors or turn on fan above light switches. To increase

ventilation but conserve heat, turn on fan and heater.

Sanctuary

Current Policy 11/7/2022: Masks required in this room to be inclusive of vulnerable populations. Ventilation status: Excellent Ventilation, fans, and heat setting controlled by program. Contact ED/Facilities to change.

Social Hall

Current Policy 11/7/2022: Masks not required in this room due to frequency of eating activities. People who are concerned about eating around other without masks are invited to eat at the outdoor tables provided. Ventilation status: Excellent Ventilation, fans, and heat setting controlled by program. Contact ED/Facilities to change.

Family Ministry

There's no place like UUCB for the Holidays! Family Ministry is going to have a very eventful December. The Coming-of-Age (COA) program is being offered again at UUCB after an over 3-year hiatus! Thank you again to those of you that volunteered to be Mentors for our amazing youth. COA will have a Mentor/Mentee Meet and Greet on December 4. The UUCB Youth Group will host a Cookie Making Event on December 10 and their annual Holiday Party on December 17. On December 11 there will also be a Hanukkah-themed Celebration Chapel for all ages where you can sing with the children's choir, make your own Menorah, and play Dreidel to score some Chocolate "Gelt" (money). There will also be a children's story read about the Japanese Sun Goddess Amaterasu during the UUCB Winter Solstice Service on December 21, which will conclude with Cookies and Cider. I can't wait to celebrate the holiday season with you!

Heaven Walker, MA
Director of Family Ministry and Lifelong Learning

Partner Church

If you think Christmas is coming way too fast, look out for St. Nicholas Day. It comes on December 6, and it is the gift-giving holiday among Transylvanian Unitarians. Children shine their shoes or boots and set them out before going to bed on December 5. Old St. Nick will leave gifts and candy for the children who were good. The others? They get a twig or lump of coal in their shoe. Christmas is celebrated more solemnly. A fish soup or stew is served on Christmas Eve. Anyone who has been to Transylvania knows what the dessert will be: chimney cakes!

So how can we celebrate the season with our partner church in Homoródújfalú? We'll have a supercard in the Atrium during December for you to sign. Look for the one saying "*Boldog karácsonyt és boldog új évet*" That's Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in Hungarian, of course! We always send a monetary gift to the village, so you are invited to make a gift of your own. Checks or on-line donations should be noted as Partner Church Christmas on the memo line. Gifts to the Village Education Fund are always welcome, but please keep those separate so we can keep our accounts in order!

What will 2023 will bring to our partnership? Help us explore the ways. Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net are eager to hear what you would like happen with us and our Transylvanian partners.

Mist Tree Moon Circle

Winter Solstice

Celebrate the Winter Solstice and the longest night of the year on Sunday, December 11 at 7 pm in the Safir Room. You may bring items to place on our altar. And printed words for your favorite solstice carols. We can sing in the return of longer days and the beginning of Earth awakening from Her slumber. Bring a snack or dessert to commune with cakes and ale for the Queen of Heaven after our ritual.

From the Board of Trustees

Elaine Miller

If you would like to view a video-recording of a previous Board of Trustees meeting, contact secretary@uucb.org.

A few mornings ago, while listening to the news about climate change, I felt a familiar fear and grief. What I heard was, our efforts are too little and too late. The feelings hovered as a dark cloud throughout the day. That evening I noticed the new Fall/Winter UU World magazine lying on my table and saw that the theme for the issue was Facing the Climate Crisis. Knowing it would offer new perspectives, I picked it up and started reading. I hope you find value in these passages* that spoke to me.

- *Throughout this pandemic, there have been long stretches where all I feel in that time is grief. Grief that feels as though it can expand to fill the whole room. I remain present to it.*
- *Some twenty years ago, in a nondescript conference room with high ceilings and Berber carpet, I witnessed an Alaska Native Elder cry while discussing climate change. She described changes many of us would find too subtle to notice—changes in seasonal migration patterns...changes since spring started arriving too early...She was doing more to combat climate change two decades ago than most people care to do today...*
- *When the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report told us that greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 in order to limit global warming, I called my best friend and told her it's time to get serious about the fact we are living during "the end." As we discussed all the life changes that we should be making as a result, I realized I needed something else in that moment: to simply hear her voice, feel joy at hearing her laugh, and know deep down that, yes, the world is very complicated, challenging, and hurtful right now, but having moments with loved ones where we are laughing*

over the phone about "end times" does, in fact, generate hope.

- *To sustain our spirits, we must keep reading and writing poetry and prayers for the earth and her many wonders. We should keep drawing and painting landscapes, soaking in the sunlight, and marveling at rain and thunder.*
- *Environmental degradation is exacerbating existing inequities; we have a moral obligation to center solutions on those most impacted.*
- *If we can continue to do as rapid actions as possible, rooted in all these bottom-up actions that people are taking, but also using our political engagement to get leverage from policies, then we can potentially do it.*
- *Focusing on our values and larger shared goals gives us strength. We can hold hope more tenaciously when we hold it together.*
- *Cooking a pot of beans from scratch is a revolutionary act that honors both our ancestors and future generations.*
- *...environmentalism is not our language in the Black church, but our language is revival. Anything old, decayed can be made new again.*
- *...this has to be everybody's top priority, and while climate change is an existential threat facing our planet, that doesn't mean that it's impossible to solve.*

Thankfully, we as a congregation can admit we have a part in the climate crisis, and then do something about it. Together, may we hold hope tenaciously.

**UU World contributors: Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, President, Nazune Menka, Alice Kurima Newberry, Erica Shadowsong, Rachel Myslivy, Nathan Hultman, Lore Stevens, Rev. Dr. Ambrose Carroll Sr., Rep. Judy Chu (CA-27)*

Board of Trustees November 2022 Actions

1. **Financial Audit:** Accepted the 2020-21 Financial Report and Audit from Healey & Associates – available to the congregation. No instances of illegal acts or fraud were found. Only one written recommendation: Improve document retention practices.
2. **Settled/called minister search:** Approved the recommendation of the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC), giving direction to continue (exclusively) with the UUA settled search process for a called minister; if the first round (winter/early spring) is not successful, the MSC will return to the Board to talk about next steps.
3. **Cope Ministerial Housing Fund:** Authorized earnings from UUCB's Cope Ministerial Housing Fund to be used to subsidize the rent or mortgage payments of our next minister. The Cope Fund will remain available to the minister for down payment on home purchase through negotiated terms with UUCB—as it has with the last two called ministries. However, a housing subsidy provides more flexibility for prospective ministers, recognizes changing trends in real estate and ministerial tenure, is lower risk and less time intensive, intrusive, complicated than a loan, and is more consistent with UU values in minimizing bias towards access to equity. The current balance of the Cope Fund is approximately \$400,000.
4. **Ministerial Agreement:** Approved a draft ministerial agreement for our next minister, for the MSC to include in the Congregational Record for prospective candidates.
5. **Financial account signatories:** Approved Finance Committee recommendation for refined provisions on authorized account signatories.
6. **Future audits:** Discussed frequency and type of financial reviews, compilations, and audits, and will consider follow up action at a future meeting
7. **Freestone:** The anticipated opinion/guidance from Sonoma County about Freestone use has not yet been received.

Social Justice

The Social Justice Council was thrilled with the support for dedicating the new Black Lives Matter sign. Thanks to everyone who signed the back of the sign and thanks to everyone who participated in making the event meaningful as well as everyone who walked down the hill for the dedication ceremony. Here's a link to Carol Carlisle's WordPress post to see the day's activity: <https://lightwords.blog/2022/11/08/a-walk-of-restoration/>

The Landscape Team has planted agave at the base of the sign. Think of it as both decoration as well as a salve for healing all the damage and pain that's gone before.

To view the video of the rededication, click here: <https://youtu.be/gHlls9k7yDU>



Executive Director Notes

Tess Snook O'Riva

My theme for this month is Kaizen. I was trained in The Toyota Way, and one of the key tenets is Kaizen. That is, roughly, to break something apart and put it back together again, but better. We would physically walk through a process as it happened (like nurses delivering medicine), document all that we saw, then entirely redesign it.

We are doing Kaizen on multiple fronts at UUCB. We passed our audit and were able to learn a lot about our processes along the way. Now we are rebuilding them even better. With the help of the Finance Committee, the Treasurer, and now TWO Assistant Treasurers, we are replacing our accounting consultants, creating a cash flow policy, and documenting transactions and decisions better than ever before. We are also scanning and labeling our historical information for easy retrieval, a monumental task! (If you have 5 minutes on a Sunday, you can help us scan and file about 15-20 documents!)

Facilities projects were a main reason we started using our new software system, Asana. Known for streamlining project management, it is now the principal way we collaborate on facilities projects, rentals, and administrative priorities. And speaking of rentals, the old and well-known Green Sheet will soon be officially retired, as we automate requests and try to ensure that congregants that want to hold events or meetings are thinking through everything they need. This can avoid a lot of needless back-and-forth since people will know their options and our needs for a successful collaboration.

This is the New Normal. Looking at the old ways of doing things and being comfortable with change. Our world has never been so turned upside down as with the pandemic, and **not** trying to find opportunities for improvement within the upheaval would be foolish. We do Sundays differently, Adult Education, Family Ministry, Facilities, pretty much everything at some level. And we are making them better.

Still, the important things remain the same. We have people we can talk to, a community to support us, and a world we are improving together. That is what makes us strong. And when one of us needs a reminder for self-care, people lovingly encourage them to take a break. Therefore, I will be off December 5-21 for a trip to Thailand with my spouse, with whom I just celebrated 20 years of marriage.

Thank you for the reminder, my dear, loving community.

UUCB wishes you a smooth and pleasant holiday season.

If this time of year is difficult for you, and you would like additional care and support, please email us at pastoralcare@uucb.org. Our pastoral care associates provide important connections of comfort and healing. They are available through calls and visits of listening presence and supportive notes.

You are not alone.

In case of a pastoral emergency, you may contact Rev. Michelle Collins at 301-675-5314 or minister@uucb.org. She is always available for pastoral needs.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Covenant of Right Relations

Love guides this church.

The quest for truth and justice is its common purpose.

To give thanks, listen deeply, speak with care, honor our differences, and seek and grant forgiveness –

These things we covenant with one another.

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 an “introduction to membership” session, sign the membership book, and commit to supporting this church through participation and financially. To become a member, please contact membership@uucb.org.

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. (Beacon is compiled and edited by Charis Domador.)

WEBSITE: <http://uucb.org>

PHONE: 510-525-0302

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS:

To subscribe to the email version of this newsletter or “The Week Ahead at UUCB,” email connections@uucb.org. You can also find both newsletters at the uucb.org website under “News.”

UUCB general discussion list:

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

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

Our Board of Trustees Widening the Circle Vision Statement:

We, the trustees of UUCB commit ourselves to championing racial justice, embodying anti-racist practices, and confronting and dismantling white supremacy culture and all forms of oppression (including but not limited to racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ageism, xenophobia and religious oppression, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia) in everything we do.

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Alice Lemieux (Family Ministry and Program Council liaison)
Heaven Walker (Director of Family Ministry & Lifelong Learning)
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