
June 2023

Theme: Delight

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Vol. 82 #6

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

Journeying Together

Dr. Rev. Michelle Collins

Beloved Ones,

We have come to the conclusion of our time together. It's been quite a journey over the past almost three years. When I started here, in August 2020, we were in the midst of more than one liminal time, transition times in-between what once was and what was yet to become. Your previous settled ministers had departed, and the church was literally happening online only. I think we all did the welcoming and starting together well! I felt very welcomed by you - especially with a supercard the size of the entire parking lot! - and I hope that you felt welcomed by me.

Then we got to work together. First was continuing to figure out how to do church during this time, going from all virtual to figuring out how to safely regather and in what forms, with sanctuary upgrades for streaming,

with building upgrades for safety, with a task force to guide the way through new procedures and considerations for healthy safety. The Widening the Circle of Concern task force did deep work, the worship tech team continued the Herculean effort of knitting together and producing countless digital worship services, the worship AV team learned and adjusted and formed and readjusted to make our live-streaming services happen, the Director of Family ministry search team found and hired Heaven Walker, and many more programs and projects that happened during this liminal time. You engaged in a respectful process and congregational decision on the future of the Freestone property. And of course, your ministerial search team was formed and then hard at work supporting the future of UUCB. There is so much that can be celebrated.

I thank you for every time that you have shown up for something, either being present or bringing yourself and your gifts to the moment. I thank you for the care and creativity that you have brought to UUCB and to our work together. And I especially thank you for how much you care for your staff. The care shown here at UUCB is truly exceptional!

And now comes the time of endings and new beginnings. I will be moving on to a new interim ministry in Williamsburg, Virginia (and yes, my boyfriend John will be going with me). I have a new beginning and so do you with Rev. Marcus's arrival in August as your settled minister. I challenge you to continue to do work with him, especially the hard work. Keep leaning into what might be possible even though it may still be unclear. And allow him to push you to making UUCB all that it can be. An important part of a minister's departure is stepping back from contact; that means while we can watch each other from afar (which the internet enables us to do), we all move on to our new minister-to-congregation relationships. I wish you all the blessings for your years ahead and know that you are poised to do great things!

Blessings, Rev. Michelle



June Services

Sundays 11 am

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

June 4

Coming of Age service

June 11

TBD

June 18

Hopes and Goodbyes

June 25

General Assembly stream

Sunday Programming

Summer Forum

Sundays at 9:30 am on Zoom

June 4 – Safe Organized Spaces (SOS). O’Neill Fernandez will present how the work of SOS creates work and housing opportunities for unhoused neighbors. SOS hires right from homeless encampments to deliver trash pick-up, water, portable showers, laundry service and many more survival necessities.

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 on Zoom

June 4 – What's Happening to the World's Beautiful Places? Don Anderson

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

June 18 (in person, not Zoom) – Censorship and Cancel Culture.
Ray Westergard

June 25 – What Has Surprised You about ChatGPT? Paul Ulbrich

Good Neighbor in June

SunWork Renewable Energy Project <https://sunwork.org>

SunWork’s purpose is to empower people to adopt solar power where it hasn’t been economically practical in the past. By making solar more affordable for low-energy-footprint homeowners and for nonprofits, SunWork puts solar power within more people’s reach.

Special Events

June 10 @ 1 pm

Jean Jackson Memorial

June 10 @ 7:30 pm

Kensington Symphony Orchestra concert

June 11 @ 12:30 pm

Calendar Summit

June 18 after service

Rev. Michelle’s goodbye celebration

June 18 @ 3 – 6 pm

Art, Wine & Chocolate fundraiser for Soroptimist International of El Cerrito. sielcerrito.org

June 18 @ 7 pm

Moon Circle Solstice gathering

June 19

Juneteenth. Church closed.

June 22 - 26

General Assembly. uua.org/ga

Announcements

Board Listening Presence

Randall Hudson: call or text (805) 705-6157 or send an email at Rdhudson2001@gmail.com

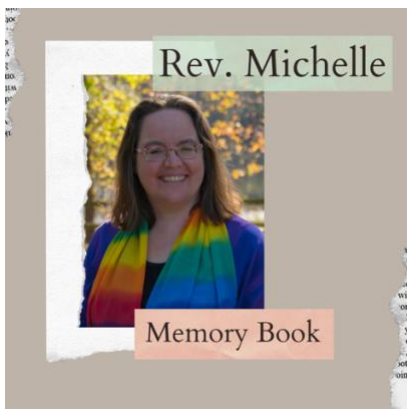
Memorial for Jean Jackson June 10 @ 1 pm

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, June 10 from 1 - 3 pm in the Fireside Room. If you plan to attend, please respond to Mariah Emerson at mantiq@earthlink.com.



Rev. Michelle's Memory Book

As Rev. Michelle's time with us ends, **we will celebrate her ministry on Sunday, June 18 following the worship service.** Join us for cake and appreciations. And if you haven't already, please contribute to the memory book being compiled for her. You can share your thoughts via photos, cards, notes (no bigger than 8-1/2 x 11). Stop by the table in the atrium on Sundays through June 11. Questions? Check with Kay Fairwell at kayfairwell@att.net



Ministerial Search Committee

Puttin' On the Search 🏴‍☠️

Our congregation did it! The vote to call Reverend Marcus Liefert as UUCB's settled minister was a unanimous **YES** on Sunday, May 7, 2023.

The work of the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) has concluded, but the congregation's journey is just beginning as we embark together upon a future of possibilities with Rev. Marcus. What awaits us is yet to unfold, but this new ministry promises to be an adventure.

On the business side, the UUA has been notified that Rev. Marcus will be our settled, Senior Minister. Our Interim Minister, Rev. Michelle, will support with the end-of-year hand-off and the UUA Transitions Office will be a resource as our Board and Rev. Marcus develop an onboarding plan. A healthy, sustainable start includes establishing a Committee on Ministry, an advisory group of lay leaders for the minister; balancing and prioritizing aspirations; and relationship building. The transition between ministries will occur in summer as our church says goodbye in June to our interim minister and prepares to welcome Rev. Marcus in August. The details of his arrival will not be managed by the search committee but are in progress.

Dearest UUCB, we are deeply thankful for the **warmth, spirit, talent, creativity, and commitment** that make this congregation so special. These attributes, and more, shone brightly in our congregational record, website and documents packet. **YOU** are really the reason we had such an amazing pool of candidates. Our ministerial search committee is so grateful for your confidence in us, your faith in the discernment process, and most heartily for the generosity of your participation. The gift of your time, attention, and counsel was our not-so-secret superpower in this year-long quest. 💕 Thank you, UUCB, for being you! 💕

It has been an honor to serve in this unique capacity and we are lucky to share this memorable milestone of entering into a new ministerial chapter with each of you.

Very truly yours - Ariel, Deborah, Don, Greg, Ladie, Lorraine, Sandy, Suzette. UUCB MSC 2022-2023.

Executive Director Notes

Tess Snook O’Riva

By the time you read this, I hope that the congregation has passed the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget. A lot of deep work went into it this year, and it’s a process and a budget that I’m proud of, with an actual projected surplus!

At UUCB, all our jobs support the mission of the church. Each staff member acts on our values, from ensuring that we aren’t renting to inappropriate groups to contracting with vendors who share our values. Decisions have processes, and although that can slow down the process, it’s what matters and it’s how it should be. So please remember that what may seem like a simple decision or action rarely is, and we work to balance the priorities of ourselves, the Board, and all congregants as best we can.

Although staff do not make changes in a vacuum, we are often approached with concerns. Lately, I’ve been glad to see that their concerns were taken seriously by other congregants and a process followed to hear them out and take a hard look at proposed changes. Regardless of the outcome, this is your spiritual home, and you have an investment in that. Working directly with the 300+ people who share that sentiment is paramount.

There is a growing interest in moving all our properties (there are 4 now) to all-electric service to stop using fossil fuels. Representatives from both Climate Justice and Buildings and Grounds attended a webinar about federal grants available to move that project forward. It would entail upgrading our service with PG&E and rewiring our main campus, and it will be an opportunity to do our part to address climate change, moving forward as best we can.

We are working so we can finally get to things like strategic planning. We have multiple people interested in helping with both IT strategic planning and safety/disaster planning. Our blossoming partnerships with the East Bay Amateur Radio Club (EBARC) and the Firewise community have moved forward our goal of being able to support our community in the event of a natural disaster. It’s an exciting time to be part of UUCB, and I hope y’all feel the same!

Partner Church

Times change, and the prospect of Rev. Marcus joining us at UUCB is a huge change. Things will be changing with our Transylvanian Partner Church Committee, but one thing will not. We have long supported the students in Homorodujfalu with contributions to the Village Education Fund administered by UUCB. A lot of things are changing in the village as well, but the need for our generosity remains. Students must travel to a distant high school where tuition is free, but room, board, and supplies are not. This is where we come in.

In days past, the committee would mail an annual appeal for contributions to the fund accompanied by a return envelope for your check. You can still send us a check or deposit one in the collection box in the Atrium. Just mark “Village Education Fund” on the memo line. You can also make payments via the Breeze application on our website or via PayPal.

Again, make sure that you direct your contribution to the Village Education Fund. One-time contributions of any amount are always welcome, but please consider setting up a monthly recurring donation.

Need more information about the Village Education Fund? Contact Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net.

Family Ministry

Heaven Walker, Director of Family Ministry and Lifelong Learning

I have always referred to myself as “UU Adjacent.” I wholeheartedly support the Seven Principles, the commitment to social justice, and the Good Neighbor projects at UUCB. I also felt welcomed by the Rumi poem that begins “Come, Come, Whoever You Are” as a member of a spiritual community that was formerly referred to as “Come As You Are” Pagan Congregation and is now “Starflower Pagan Congregation.” I felt affinity with the Mist Tree Circle, and grateful that an organization such as the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans exists at UUCB and nationally. As a former Professor of Humanities, Mythology, Philosophy, and World Religion I felt inspired that UUs come from so many different faith backgrounds and that “Personal

Theology” is often considered more sacred than traditional doctrine. However, as a tradition it seemed to lack diversity in many congregations.

My perspective completely shifted when I attended *Finding Our Way Home: A Retreat and Conference for Religious Professionals of Color*. The conference included Unitarian Universalist Settled Ministers, Interim Ministers, Chaplains, Administrators, Religious Educators, Family Ministry Directors and Coordinators, Directors of Congregational Life, Music Ministry Directors, and UUA staff from all over the country.

We had a “Black Church” style service with gospel music and Southern style preaching, a Buddhist meditational healing service and memorial for victims of Asian hate, a presentation by the Black Unitarian Universalists (BLUU) and the Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Ministries (DRUMM). I was able to take a spontaneous musical creation workshop with a very talented musical director, participated in a Ramadan meditation with an Islamic UU minister, sang in the choir and participated in a group *Limpia* (Mexican spiritual cleansing ritual) with our new UUA presidential candidate, had a deep conversation with the president of the Starr King School for the Ministry, had a ministerial conversation with the Interim Minister of the UU Church of Davis, CA, the Music Director of the UU Church of the Twin Cities, the RE Director of a UU Congregation in the Chicagoland area, and countless others.

I also discovered that the UU Church and tradition has become a haven and a home to many Black LGBTQ people such as myself that were not welcomed in traditional Catholic or Protestant churches and communities as a whole. My mind and my heart were blown wide open by this gathering, and you will now have a proud Unitarian Universalist Director of Family Ministry and Lifelong Learning. The *Finding Our Way Home Retreat* helped me find my way home to Unitarian Universalism, and I am eternally grateful.

Social Justice

UUCB Welcomes a Three Sisters Garden

On the initiative of the Honoring Indigenous Peoples Group, after the shared reading of Robin Wall Kimmerer’s book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Jim Acock and Sheldon Jones have built a raised bed with deer fencing. Carol Carlisle and others are planting corn, beans, and squash. This is a time-honored form of companion planting among many Indigenous groups. The corn provides support for the beans, the beans add nitrogen to the soil, and the squash leaves shade the soil and inhibit weeds.

This temporary demonstration garden symbolizes:

- the idea that all living things are interconnected, rely on one another for survival, and help one another to flourish
- connecting and partnering across UUCB groups, including the Honoring Indigenous Peoples Group, Landscape Team, Buildings and Grounds Committee, Social Justice Council, and Family Ministry
- in the spirit of our Land Acknowledgment, providing education regarding Indigenous history and culture to the congregation and wider community.

In Robin Wall Kimmerer’s inspiring words, “The most important thing each of us can know is our unique gift and how to use it in the world... Being among the sisters provides a visible manifestation of what a community can become when its members understand and share their gifts... Alone, a bean is just a vine, squash an oversize leaf. Only when standing together with corn does a whole emerge which transcends the individual. The gifts of each are more fully expressed when they are nurtured together than alone. In ripe ears and swelling fruit, they counsel us that all gifts are multiplied in relationship. This is how the world keeps going.”

From the Board of Trustees

Email secretary@uucb.org for Board meeting recordings.

As we stand on the borders of the past and future, I find myself reflecting on our journey so far and the promise it holds for the days to come. The beginning of summer traditionally heralds a time of rest and relaxation, but right now, I'm not feeling like resting.. I am filled with gratitude and anticipation. There is an almost palpable sense of readiness in the air, as if we are poised on the brink of a great leap forward. Contributing to this feeling in large measure is the Reverend Marcus Liefert coming home as our settled minister into our community's unanimous embrace.

We are, indeed, at a juncture in our history where we find ourselves prepared for change and growth. This, in large part, is thanks to the hard work and dedication of our search committee. To each of you, I extend a heartfelt thank you. Watching you work has been nothing short of captivating and your accomplishments have exceeded all expectations. You have crafted a result that exceeds the happiest of endings that movie writers contrive to imagine.

Another invaluable player in our journey has been Rev. Michelle. Your contribution has been a harmonious blend of leadership and guidance, and we could not have wished for a more perfect fit. Your shepherding has been a beacon, lighting our way, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

As we move forward, there is an essential understanding that must underpin our actions: there is much that depends on a minister, and much that does not. It is this balance that has allowed us to grow, to become activated, to express our individual and community-wide agency, and to solve problems. The questions of who we have become during this time and who our new minister has become are indeed fascinating. He has emerged as a multigenerational, multi-caused, listening, comprehending, and spirit-driven focal point.

What does this mean for our future? How will our growing influx of lay leadership and our new ministerial leadership shape us? While the exact contours of this path are yet to be drawn, I can assure you that the foundation is already set. We are evolving, singing the same song but with a new

arrangement, under the guidance of a new conductor.

I have positive expectations. We appreciate and look forward to continuation and the growth of mutually supportive programs from our diverse circles. We are ready to release and express our spiritual and worldly purpose. With open hearts and minds, we stand on the precipice of our future, looking back at how far we've come, appreciating this moment as a time we will remember as "The Leap Forward."

Let us carry forward the spirit of gratitude and anticipation, for we do not lack direction. We are a symphony in the making, each of us playing our part, together creating the beautiful music of community, growth, and purpose.

Here's to a wonderful next chapter in our collective story.

Cordell Sloan for the UUCB Board of Trustees.

Board of Trustees May 2023 Actions

1. **COVID-19 - Adopted Opening Task Force recommendations:**

- a. Suspended requirement for COVID-19 vaccination for attendance
- b. Supported protocols such as:
 - Masking while in the Sanctuary, but optional in other church areas
 - Right to wear a mask without fear of complaint
 - Registration for Sunday worship service
 - Not attending if ill/have contagious symptoms or have tested positive or been exposed to COVID-19 in last 5 days.
 - If test positive within 4 days of attendance, notify others who were in close contact.
 - Authorized the Executive Director to make protocol changes, at least until the Safety Policy Task Force has established a revised contagious disease Safety Policy

2. **Freestone Oversight Committee:**

- a. Appointed: Alan Davis, Beth Pollard, David Wemmer, Larry Nagel, Susan Lankford, and Tom Tripp
- b. Funding: Created a Freestone Contingency Fund of up to \$5,000 in fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, and up to \$7,500 in fiscal year July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024 for expenses authorized by the Board of Trustees or the Freestone Oversight Committee in support of the Congregation-approved Resolution No. 22-1; to be reimbursed to the General Fund.

Board of Trustees May 2023 Actions (continued)

3. Adopted Board 2023-24 Priorities and Goals:

- a. Board Vision: Care, Impact and Growth
- b. Board Mission and Goals: Spiritual care and growth; Champions for love and justice; Courageous leadership; Stewardship & sustainability; Connections and community

4. Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget: Approved for adoption by congregation.

5. UUA General Assembly June 21-15, 2023:

Designated delegates: Evelie Sâles Posch, Suzette Anderson-Duggan, Rev. Jane Ramsey, and authorized Board Co-Presidents to fill the four remaining delegate positions (can attend online)

6. Endowment Committee: Re-appointed Anita Mermel for a 3-year term

7. Affirmed as Older Americans Month: May 2023

8. Congregational Meeting: Approved agenda for May 21, 2023

From the Awards Committee

We are in a time of great celebration: our newly appointed minister, Reverend Marcus, will be installed in August, our Freestone Oversight Committee is being formed after our successful deliberation during our March Congregational gathering, the Opening Task Force dutifully completed its daunting task, and the Board of Trustees continues to support this beloved community with strong leadership, just to name a few of the highlights.

In such an abundance of riches, we are feeling especially grateful for those who serve this church. Two of our members have served this church for so long and in so many ways that they have been awarded the Schweitzer Award! Schweitzer Medals are awarded to recipients who have been supporters of Unitarian Universalist churches for at least 15 years and of our church for five years; who have participated in a number of church functions "above and beyond the normal call of duty", who have been church leaders; and who have participated in outreach activities.

It is with great pleasure that we recognized **Lisa Maynard** and **Jim Gasperini** as our Schweitzer Award recipients during our May Congregational Meeting.



Lisa's volunteering activities include various events and fundraisers which have led to greater involvement in event planning/organization for ordinations, retirement parties, settled minister installation,

goodbye parties, and other celebrations. Her leadership accolades include facilitating Chalice Circles for eleven years and co-coordinating the Chalice Circle Planning program for six years and continuing. She has served on Stewardship Committees several times and continues to participate in Stewardship Team again this year. She served on the Capital Campaign Leadership Team, as co-chair of the Hospitality Team, and served two years as Convener of the Coordinating Team. She most recently served 2-1/2 years on the Opening Task Force during the height of a global pandemic.



Jim's volunteer activities include lending his beautiful voice to Luminescence for twelve years, mentoring youth in the Coming of Age program (four times!) as well as serving as our Webmaster

—transitioning and transforming UUCB's online presence, as well as the look of our website and the slides used during our church services. His leadership accolades include serving on the Nominating Committee, Secretary of the UUCB Friends of Developing Indigenous Resources (DIR), Program Council Design and Communications teams, Fellowship One Champions, and serving three years as a Worship Associate and four years of Chalice Circle facilitation. During the May 21 Congregational Meeting, Lenore Ralston presented the award to Lisa, and Lonnie Moseley and Karen Elliott presented the award to Jim. Join us in celebrating the contributions of these amazing congregants.

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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Michael Armstrong, Vice President
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Carolyn James, Treasurer
Bill Brown
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Tess Snook O’Riva (Executive Director and Convener)
Rev. Michelle Collins
Alice Lemieux (Family Ministry)
Beth Pollard (Board president)
Heaven Walker (Director of Family Ministry & Lifelong Learning)

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Lonnie Moseley (Adult Religious Exploration)
Lenore Ralston (Finance and Chalice Circles)
Cordell Sloan (Board Liaison)

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