

May 2023
Theme: Creativity

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley
Vol. 82 #5

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

Ministerial Search Update



Are you on the edge of your seat? The search committee certainly is! Candidating Week is in full swing, and we are delighted to have finally broken our silence and shared that Rev. Marcus Liefert is our candidate!

Many of you remember Rev. Marcus fondly from his 2011-2013 internship under Revs. Barbara and Bill

Hamilton-Holway. In becoming reacquainted with him, the search team has been intentional about letting go of preconceptions, allowing ourselves to come to know him as the amazing, mature, and experienced minister he has become. We invite you to bring that same open heart to welcoming and getting to know him.

Rev. Marcus will preach on April 30 and again on May 7. After the service on May 7, we'll get down to the business of voting to call him into settled ministry. Leading up to that momentous collective decision at the Special Congregational Meeting [is this schedule](#) of lively in-person and Zoom events. With 60+ vibrant UUCB programs and groups, it's impossible for one candidate to visit every one. We have combined groups where possible and scheduled several meetings open to every congregant. We hope that as many folks as possible participate so that Rev. Marcus really gets to see our community in its many facets. We want to see your beautiful faces, hear questions, hopes, and ideas, and listen to your stories.

You can peruse Rev. Marcus' work on his website: [formative experiences](#), [approach to worship](#), [reflective writing](#), and [congregational life moments](#). On the lighter and more personal side, he was just married this April 16 to his wonderful partner Caitlyn, and he has a lovely seven-year-old son named Henry. He loves children and young people and has served as director of Chalice Camp and facilitator for The Mosaic Project. He brings warmth, playfulness, authenticity, and creativity to everything he touches!



May Services

Sundays 11 am

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

May 7

Rev. Marcus Liefert preaching.

May 14

Co-Creating the Future

May 21

Doctors of Durability

May 22

In The Beginning: Creation Stories and Myths

Religious Education

May 7, 14, 28

Coffee Hour

Sundays at Noon

In person in the Social Hall

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Sundays 9:30 am in person and on Zoom:

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

May 7 – Rev. Marcus Liefert, Ministerial Candidate for Settled Ministry

May 21 – Zae Asa Illo Youth Spirit Artworks/Tiny House counselor. Zae Asa Illo is a member at San Francisco Friends Meeting. His spiritual leadings are to ministries of abundance and radical hospitality. He co-founded the weekly Friday Food Sharing ministry (2014), [foodREV](#) (2014), and streetDoves (nonviolent, civilian-based defense training (2017). Zae will graduate from a Quaker seminary, Earlham School of Religion, in May 2023. Presently, he leads the weekly Bible study at Glide Memorial Church in the Tenderloin of San Francisco, where he also started a weekly outreach prayer ministry.

May 28 – Heaven Walker, UUCB Director of Family Ministry.

“Mindfulness, Hebrew Priestesses and Jew-Witches, Oh My! Judaism in the New Age.” When people hear the word Judaism they often think of the traditional Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Traditions. However, there is a new movement in Judaism that embraces things like Mindfulness and Meditation, Women's Spirituality, Earth Based Judaism, and even Paganism. Come and learn about the Jewish Institute of Spirituality, The Kohenet Hebrew Priestesses, Wilderness Torah, The Jew-Witch Collective, and Judaism in the new age.

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

May 7 – Directions for AI. Harold Ogren and Marcia Bates.

May 14 – Topic Selection for June and Short Topic Discussion. Ray Westergard.

May 21 (in person) – Israel: State of the State. Hope Carroll and Don Anderson

May 28 – Oranges and Walnuts (Secret). Gail Morrison and Susan Singh

Special Events

April 30 – May 7

Candidating Week. Visit this link for opportunities to meet Rev. Marcus: <https://uucb.org/events/candidating-week/>

May 7 @ 12:30 pm
Ministerial Candidate Vote

May 7 @ 1 pm

LFDMC field trip to Cal Performances at Zellerbach Hall to see Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of The Sower*.

May 10 @ 7 pm

Social Justice Council discussion led by Eli Moore.

May 11 @ 7 pm

Meditation to Heal Trauma. Adult Ed workshop adulted@uucb.org.

May 12 @ 6 pm

Sacred Femininity Ritual and Celebration.

May 14

Mother's Day

May 20

1 pm: People of Color Caucus

4-8 pm: Parents' Night Out

7 pm: Youth Social Event

May 21 @ 8:30 am

Adult OWL

May 21 @ 12:30 pm
May Congregational Meeting

May 28 @ 1 pm

WOWS (Working to Overcome White Supremacy). Anyone who wants to challenge racism and white supremacy is welcome!

May 29

Memorial Day. Church closed.

Announcements

Board Listening Presence

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

Candidating Week April 30 – May 7

We welcome you to participate, as you are able, in the festivities of this week. It is an opportunity to meet **Reverend Marcus Liefert**, experience his ministry in action, and connect with him on a personal level. We are in the home stretch of the search process. Let's land on a high note! View the schedule: <https://uucb.org/events/candidating-week/>

General Assembly June 21-25

This year's UUA General Assembly (GA) is taking place June 21-25 in Pittsburgh PA and virtually. The GA grapples with and makes decisions on the burning issues facing our denomination with engaging workshops, lectures, and worship opportunities. And Music! Anyone can attend. More info: <https://bit.ly/3mUPLuV>

Chalice Camp (www.chalicecamp.org) June 26-30



Stewardship Campaign Update



As the stewardship committee prepares this update in mid-April, our pledges for next year have brought us to 91% of our pledge goal. We're getting closer but we need about \$40,000 more to reach our target. Unfortunately,

Reverend Michelle's magic trick of pulling coins from a person's ear can't help us with this. By the time you receive your May Beacon, we hope to have received those additional pledges, and maybe even more! On May 3, the Board of Trustees plans to vote on a 2023-24 budget to present for congregational review and approval at our May 21 Congregational Meeting.

We tried very hard to make our pledge goal realistic: we based it on past pledging and current knowledge of our congregation. About 40% of UUCB's projected 2023-24 revenue will be provided by our pledges. If we meet or exceed our goal, we believe that we will be able to offer fair and competitive compensation to our capable and committed staff—a necessity not only for living our values, but also for retaining high-quality staff in a tight labor market—as well as paying for basic operational necessities (such as utilities and insurance), to continue our wonderful programs and activities. If we do exceed our goal, we may be able to say "yes" to more of the funding requests that came in this year, and we will be in an even better position to respond to the unexpected next year.

So, if you value our UUCB community, activities, and spiritual home, please:

1. If you haven't yet pledged, please do pledge ASAP at <https://uucb.org/about-us/give/stewardship/> or by emailing stewardship@uucb.org (remember that a pledge of any value is sincerely appreciated!); and
2. If you already pledged, please consider increasing your pledge. Contact [Anne Greenwood](mailto:Anne.Greenwood) to communicate a pledge increase.

What a wonderful year we have to look forward to!

Opening Task Force (OTF)

Goodbye – Welcome

Goodbye – The Opening Task Force (OTF) is saying goodbye to its mission, after over three years of service. Welcome – The Safety Policy Task Force will continue to ensure that UUCB is a safe and functioning place during any pandemic and other challenging times.

Heartfelt appreciation and thanksgiving for the congregation in support of the OTF. The congregation's resilience, commitment to science, engagement with vaccines, boosters, and masks, and acceptance and respect for our COVID protocols has been commendable. Together our efforts have helped UUCB reopen and function safely and productively. Over three years, we have had very, very few infections on our campus.

Kudos also to our Interim Minister, Rev. Michelle, our Executive Director Tess Snook O'Riva, and the Board of Trustees for their engagement and support of the OTF. After over 75 OTF meetings every other week for three years and numerous reports, there is important information to be saved. The OTF will organize and file its relevant information in the appropriate church file so the history is there for any future needed endeavor. If you want to share your knowledge and experience with the Safety Policy Task Force, contact our Executive Director (ED) Tess Snook O'Riva for more information at ed@uucb.org.

Lastly, let us remember how important vaccines, boosters, masks, and the care we show for each other have been in getting us to today's new normal. We wish you all a safe and healthy future.

OTF Members: Patrick Cullinane (Chair), Sheldon Jones, Lisa Maynard, Tess Snook O'Riva (ED), and Rev. Michelle Collins at planning@uucb.org.

Social Justice

At our May meeting, Wednesday May 10 @ 7 pm, the entire congregation and all our friends are invited to hear an important speaker, Eli Moore, from the Othering and Belonging Institute (OBI) at UC Berkeley as he shares creative possibilities for UUCB's involvement in our local communities.

The OBI describes its purpose: "Belonging is the solution. The Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley advances groundbreaking approaches to transforming structural marginalization and inequality. We are scholars, organizers, communicators, researchers, artists, and policymakers committed to building a world where all people belong."

According to the OBI website, "Eli Moore is Director of the Community Power and Policy Partnerships Program (formerly the California Community Partnerships Program) at the Othering & Belonging Institute. Over the last twenty years, Eli has facilitated numerous [participatory action research processes](#) and published various reports and strategy papers that have been cited by local, national, and international media outlets and policy-making bodies. His research focuses broadly on urban planning and policy, political economy, race, and human geography."

As we all know, the UUA – and our own congregation – are encouraging us to Widen the Circle of Concern, which now includes our new ELDT group: Education for Liberation Development Team. As part of these programs, the Social Justice Council is excited to invite everyone to join us on May 10. Mr. Moore will describe some of the work the OBI does, what his own work involves and – of particular interest to UUCB – the possibilities he sees for us to become involved in racial justice issues in our local communities.

Do join us in welcoming Eli Moore at 7 pm, Wednesday, May 10.

You will find the zoom link in The Week Ahead.

From the Board of Trustees

Michael Armstrong, Vice President

For a videorecording of a previous Board of Trustees meeting, please contact secretary@uucb.org for a link.

“Turning the corner” is a phrase used by many, but it can help boost spirits after a difficult time, assess where you’ve been and where you’re going, summarize a transition period.

When I researched this phrase as a possible theme for this month’s Letter from the Board, so many synonyms popped up: overcome, rebound, recover, recuperate, advance, better, boost, correct, develop, enhance, lift, progress, promote, raise, reform, revamp, revise, rise.

Well, it seems that our congregation has turned several significant corners lately. We successfully debated the Future of Freestone, found a new Ministerial Candidate, balanced a budget, and began the process of emerging from a Global Pandemic as the Opening Task Force successfully completed its task and adjourned.

Although each is equal in its significance, I would like to look at two of these corners turned.

The Future of Freestone was decided after Reverend Michelle’s extensive outreach to engage the entire congregation in a widespread fact-finding process, which included not just data but was balanced by the emotions allowed to be expressed. The Board provided guidance and a well-navigated Congregational Meeting was held. (Special thanks for Stephanie Ann Blythe, our Parliamentarian). The congregation engaged in productive dialogue that allowed every single person the opportunity to speak. Nominations for the Freestone Oversight Committee are being considered as you read this. This is a monumental corner turned, which is not just about Freestone, but reaffirms how we make decisions as a congregation: inclusively, unafraid of differing viewpoints expressed respectfully.

Finding a Ministerial Candidate was also monumental. Special thanks to the Search Committee! I must admit my first emotion after realizing that I myself, as a congregant, would not know the outcome of the search until it was revealed to all was ... fear ... “what if I don’t like the choice?” But then I looked again at *who* was

shepherding the process and all doubts melted away. The most trusted members had been chosen to represent my individual interests. And they did not fail. Marcus is an outstanding candidate. My own personal corner turned where I let go, and trusted.

And the discussion of the items above have not closed. “Turning the corner” does not mean “closure.” None of the synonyms listed reflected stasis. Turning the corner is a dramatic and vibrant process where we enhance, promote and lift.

Langston Hughes wrote: “When you turn the corner, and you run into yourself, then you know that you have turned all the corners that are left.” We turned every corner together.

Board of Trustees April 2023 Actions

- 1. Freestone:** Recognized the respectful work of everyone at the March 26 congregational meeting. With the congregation approval of Resolution 22-1, the Board initiated a call for suggested names for appointment to the Freestone Oversight Committee (send to president@uucb.org), for Board consideration at its May 3 meeting. Time sensitive vacation rental-related permit fees will also be addressed on May 3.
- 2. COVID-related policies:** Received final report, including survey results, from the Opening Task Force – with recommendations to discontinue vaccination requirement, require masking in the Sanctuary only, and to support Sunday sign-in; the Board will act on these on May 3.
- 3. Parsonage:** Authorized up to \$88,000 from the Cope Ministerial Housing Fund for repairs and renovations to the recently-donated (from Jane Lundin) parsonage house in El Cerrito.
- 4. Nominating Committee:** Approved for congregational affirmation the Nominating Committee members for 2023-24: Lynne Cahoon (continuing), Michael DeWitt, Don Klose, Anita Mermel, Sandy Portillo-Robins, Ariel Smith-Iyer, Terry Stokes (continuing), Andrew Swan, Marta Tobey
- 5. Endowment Committee:** Received its report on activities, recommended fiscal year 2023-24 distribution of 4% of fund earnings, totaling \$44,635, and contributions of \$40,000, to the Ladd Griffith Building Fund.
- 6. FY2023-24 Budget:** Reviewed draft budget; on May 3 meeting, Board will finalize budget for congregational vote on May 21.

Executive Director Notes

Finally! We have the name of the ministerial candidate! As you can imagine, staff have been anxious to hear who the new person might be, and we are very gratified to hear there's so much support for this candidate.

One of my biggest projects for the past two months has been doing the paperwork and renovating the newly donated house on Lexington Avenue. We understand the candidate has decided not to move into it, so we are beginning the process of looking for tenants. It is a two-story, two bedroom, one and a half bath house that is walkable to El Cerrito Plaza. Please email me if you know anyone interested.

The number of long-term leases and community partnerships continues to grow. The Board directed that we work to help UUCB be seen as a valuable asset to the entire community. We have hosted events such as a Kensington neighborhood disaster preparedness effort, the Kensington Fire District paper shredding, our e-waste drive, and we are working on hosting a blood drive. We continue to have conversations with other local interest groups aligned with our mission to support their efforts.

Many discussions have started regarding improving communications, systems, and processes, and I foresee some real progress in simplifying the way things work at UUCB. When systems and processes are in place and working well it makes everyone's life easier and will hopefully encourage additional participation. The fact that UUCB is seeing an increase in membership, and those new members being excited about participating in our activities, is very heartening. There are new faces every week!

In preparation for the congregational meeting on May 21, I will be hosting two informational sessions this month regarding the UUCB budget. If you are interested in digging a bit deeper into our financial systems and goals, please attend one of these sessions: May 12 at 6 pm or May 15 at 3 pm, both via Zoom. It is my fondest hope that I can present a budget that meets with unanimous approval!

This is an exciting time to be part of UUCB! I look forward to working with the minister chosen by the congregation and am optimistic about the future.

Adult Exploration Workshop

May 11, 7 pm on Zoom: "Meditation to Heal Trauma" with Alisa Wang, UUCB Member. Learn how to unlock your own resilience and inner strength through the practice of mindfulness. Register by emailing adulted@uucb.org.

Partner Church

Last month we told you about the upcoming IARF 36th World Congress to take place in Transylvania on September 4-6. We really didn't tell you anything about the International Association for Religious Freedom. The IARF may be familiar to UUCB's elders, but younger generations may need a brief primer:

"The IARF was established in 1900 as the world's first international interfaith organisation and brought together representatives of liberal religion from different traditions, cultures and continents. Currently it has over 40 members, religious communities, educational institutions and others, in Africa, America, Europe, the Middle East as well as South and East Asia. They represent such diverse religious traditions as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Native religions, Shintoism, Unitarianism/Universalism, Zoroastrianism and others. The World Congresses have been organised every three or four years for a number of decades to gather members of the IARF and others around a topic relevant to people of (liberal) religious convictions in order to facilitate dialogue, learning, exchange and collaboration between individuals and communities."

Be sure to visit their website at <https://iarf.net/congress-2023/> for updates on the final program and speakers. As mentioned last month, Anne Greenwood is planning to go to the IARF Congress and adding a trip to Homoródújfalú. Talk to Anne at a Sunday service or contact her at annegt1@sbcglobal.net if you are interested in going. Planning is in the very beginning stages, but don't wait to let Anne know if you want to come along. For anything else, you can contact me, Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com.



Easter Egg Hunt & Spring Festival

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/announcement 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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