
October 2023

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Church of Berkeley Vol. 82 #10

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

From the Minister

Our theological house is always in the midst of renovation. Revelation is not sealed, we say, believing there will always be an unfolding edge to our human understanding. That the way the universe is ever expanding is reflected in a basic feature of existence: no time and place, no way of thinking, no one worldview can capture any complete and ultimate, unchanging truth. And so, we live in a theological house under construction.

We've taken a look at our walls, representing our ecclesiology, our understanding of covenant and what it means to be a spiritual community, its shape and purpose. We've walked through our doorways, how we understand eschatology, and finding an ultimate destination in the here and now. We've gazed up at our roof and considered our soteriology, the question of salvation and where we place our faith when the world is too much with us. Now we turn to the foundation, how we understand the fundamental nature of divinity of humanity, a theological anthropology. Over the next few weeks, we'll finish our tour, first with the garden, representing pneumatology, or how spirit moves through the world. Finally, we'll gaze out our windows, representing missiology, and celebrate a Social Justice Sunday as we consider what underpins our understanding of our mission in relationship with our neighbors.

This month I hope to begin the Ground and Horizon conversations in small groups that we'll be having throughout the church year, conversations about our histories with this congregation and our hopes for its future. One of the questions you'll probably hear from me a few times this year is a question I learned from the poet David Whyte. It's a necessary starting place for any kind of renovation, whether of the home or the heart:

What conversation do you, or we, need to stop having?

I look forward to hearing your thoughts!

– Rev. Marcus Liefert



October Services

Sundays 11 am

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

October 1

Finding a Foundation

October 8

Blow in the Wind, Rise in the Sea

October 15

Music Sunday

October 22

The World Outside Our Windows

October 29

Harvests from the Memory Tree

Religious Exploration

Oct. 1 & 8 Classes

Oct. 15 Celebration Chapel

Oct. 22 Social Justice Activities

Oct. 29 Halloween/Fall Festival

Coffee Hour

Sundays after the service in the
Social Hall

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Sundays at 9:30 am on Zoom or in person (details in The Week Ahead)

October 1 – Rev. Carolyn West presents "What the Heck is Jesus Doing at UUCB?" From Carolyn: "Believe me when I tell you that finding Jesus at UUCB was an utter surprise! TBH, it's hard to talk about. So, let's get to it and unpack our assumptions about belief and about Jesus and about other aspects of belief systems."

October 8 – Rev. Zae Asa Illo, Operations Manager, Youth Spirit Artworks, on "My Personal Journey."

Zae has an M.Div. from a Quaker seminary - Earlham School of Religion - with an emphasis in entrepreneurial ministry. His spiritual call is to live out a ministry of collective redemption and mutual aid. Among Friends, he co-founded the weekly Friday Food Sharing ministry (2014) and foodREV (2014). Presently, he leads the weekly Bible study and a weekly street prayer ministry at Glide Memorial church in the Tenderloin of San Francisco. Zae is working on a laundry delivery service that supports free washes to persons in need.

October 22 – Dr. Victoria Lee presents "The Poetry of Rumi"

Be prepared to be transported to inner spaces that we don't often visit in our busy lives. Dr. Lee will read selected poems of Rumi and engage with us on the poetry's impact, nuance, and transformative power.

October 29 – Kevin Fisher-Paulson, SF Chronicle Columnist

Kevin has made us laugh, cry, and be inspired by his tender and hilariously honest tales of gay-parenting. But when cancer was discovered, Kevin made a decision to go through the medical experience with curiosity, humor and a commitment to look for joy. It is a joy to be with Kevin as he shares his spiritual journey with cancer. He publishes a weekly column with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and his writings appear in four books. He is also a Chief Deputy with the San Francisco Sheriff's Office, where he has pursued rehabilitation alternatives for almost thirty years.

Youth and Children's Choir Rehearsal

Sundays at 10 am

Open to all children and youth, ages 5 ½ and up. No prior musical experience required. We help lead the Sunday worship service once or twice per month. Occasionally we participate in other music events!

Humanist Connections

Sundays 1 pm on Zoom. In person on the third Sunday of the month.

Special Events

Oct. 1

9:30 am Parents' Discussion Group

Oct. 8

1:30 pm Schubert & Gjeilo Choral Concert (more on page 5)

Oct. 15

9 am Adult OWL

1 pm WOWS Working to Overcome White Supremacy

Oct. 21

9 am Work Party

1 pm People of Color Caucus

4 pm Parents' Night Out

6:30 pm Youth Social Event

Oct. 22 – Social Justice Sunday

(more on page 5)

Oct. 28

9 am – GRIP Harmony Walk

7:30 pm – Kensington Symphony Orchestra Concert

Oct. 29

Noon – Fall Festival

Good Neighbor

Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP)

<https://gripcares.org> GRIP is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic coalition of congregations from varied faiths working together as a diverse and inclusive coalition dedicated to helping those of our community in need to transition to self-sufficiency. GRIP transforms the lives of homeless, hungry, and disenfranchised people.

Announcements

Board Listening Presence

Randall Hudson: call or text (805) 705-6157 or send an email at RdHUDSON2001@gmail.com

Masking Is Now Optional

101 people responded to our Masking Poll, and over 82% of them said they would continue to attend Sunday services if masking in the Sanctuary was optional. The comments reflected that people are both maintaining a sense of vigilance, while also having faith in their community to stay safe and do what's necessary to protect each other. **So masking is now optional throughout the campus.**



Sunday Volunteers Needed

The Sunday Kitchen Team welcomes both volunteer help—especially for cleanup!—and donations of food. Feel free to bring in cookies or other desserts any time. For other items, please email your offer in advance to gerrykeen01@gmail.com and annharlow77@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

November 5

Liebeslieder Concert

November 10

Lawrence Lecture with Matthew Fox (more on page 5)

November 19

Organ Recital with Katya Kolesnikova

Executive Director Notes

Tess Snook O'Riva

Well, I survived Burning Man. My first Burn ever, and we got completely flooded. I have been to a wide variety of music festivals, but nothing like that. I made art, friends, and memories. And then the rain hit.

Two months of rain fell in two days. No one in or out for over two days. Other than perhaps destroying a few pairs of shoes, it was a wonderful experience. People helping each other with food and supplies, checking on each other's welfare, and still keeping the party going. Kinda reminded me of UUCB...

As a reminder, when the Opening Task Force disbanded, I was tasked with monitoring the Covid situation and recommendations for the health and safety of our congregation. As we come into the fall, the incidence of Covid diagnoses has increased, even before flu season has officially begun. That said, I feel we are all better equipped to deal with communicable diseases in general. This was definitely reflected in our recent Masking Poll. (See "Masking Is Now Optional" at left).

Should the situation change, I am happy to report that we have made progress in the area of building a robust Safety Council. While members are being confirmed, there is a taskforce looking at our current safety policy, and a key meeting of response personnel and volunteers has already happened.

The key tenets of the physical safety of our campus will be coordinated by our **new Facilities Manager, Peter Barnholdt**. Peter will be on campus during weekdays starting October 2 and has already spent a week here in training and doing inventory. We are looking forward to all his ideas and experience being put to good use!

So yes, there's a lot going on. And as always, we will stay in covenant and in community to support and care for each other. And in case you ever need to know, remember that in large quantities of wet, clay mud, wear "sock, bag, shoe, bag, sock," in that order.

– Tess, ed@uucb.org.

From the Board of Trustees

Treasurer's Update

We are so fortunate at UUCB to have an amazing Finance Committee! After joining the committee last fall, I felt encouraged to take on the role of Treasurer, knowing I could count on the wisdom, depth of knowledge, and dedication of this group. Much gratitude to Anne Greenwood, Linda Laskowski, Larry Nagel, and Lenore Ralston (all past Treasurers), Pier Sun Ho (liaison to the Board), Jason Russell (liaison to the Endowment Committee), and Tess Snook O'Riva (Executive Director). David Roberts graduated from the committee this spring but has been an invaluable resource.

In January, we engaged a new contract accountant to conduct our monthly and year-end closing, with the goal of more timely financial reporting. Our books are made complex by the many special-purpose funds we maintain, and we have very limited resources with which to do the accounting. We made some progress and were able to submit timely monthly financial reports to the board this spring. We are now working on closing last fiscal year (FY 22-23, the year ended June 30, 2023). While the numbers are not yet final, we are projecting that FY 22-23 will be close to break-even. Our congregation-approved budget had anticipated an operating loss of \$42K, and we did better than that. A full accounting will be provided in a couple of months, as we prepare for our annual review by an independent CPA firm.

In addition to monitoring our financial results, the committee worked with Tess to develop a balanced budget for FY 23-24. We also worked on various policy questions, providing background information and recommendations to the full board for their decision-making.

Looking ahead, we have some exciting challenges and opportunities on the horizon. At our September Board meeting, Tom Tripp shared a report from the Ad Hoc Electrification Committee. Comprised of members from the Buildings & Grounds and Climate Justice committees, the ad hoc group has been researching the process to convert our main campus to all-electric and eliminate our use of natural gas. The project would include replacing our obsolete HVAC and water heating systems with modern, efficient heat pump technology, and improving ventilation. The Board voted to embrace the vision of an all-electric campus and to continue

exploring this path, recognizing our moral and spiritual responsibility to reduce greenhouse gases. It is clear this would require a significant capital investment, with a rough initial estimate of at least \$800K. Government grants, tax credits, loans, and a capital campaign will be some of the avenues we will explore, to try to bring this vision to reality.

– Carolyn James, Treasurer

Board of Trustees September 2023 Actions

1. **Change in Board Meeting Start Time:** The start of Board meetings, open to the congregation, will change from 7 pm to 7:15 pm, starting October 4.
2. **Committee on Ministry:** The committee will be Suzette Anderson-Duggan, Sheldon Jones, Hilary Lorraine, Ladie Malek, Dave Roberts, Vakhid Shimanski, and Kerry Simpson, as ratified by the Board.
3. **By-Laws Task Force:** Issued a call for members interested in appointment to a task force to review and propose revisions to UUCB bylaws; contact board@uucb.org, or David Rosales or Carolyn James if you are interested.
4. **Freestone:** The congregational resolution calls for \$250,000 in funds to be raised by December 1, 2024. The Board determined that if a governmental agency has made a funding obligation to UUCB for a conservation easement by December 1, 2024, it would qualify as "funds raised" even if the funds have not been paid to UUCB by that date.
5. **Campus Electrification:** Endorsed the vision for UUCB to become an all-electric campus. This is with the understanding that the vision will be realized in stages over a period of time, as opportunities and funds become available for replacing our 20 gas furnaces, upgrading the electrical service, and associated work.

meeting, contact secretary@uucb.org

The Board of Trustees meets on the first Wednesday of each month on Zoom. To receive the link to the agenda packet, the Zoom link or a recording of a previous meeting, please contact secretary@uucb.org for a link.

Choral Concert (Oct. 8)

Enjoy Schubert's immortal melodic gift in his lovely, gentle *Mass in G* – composed while he was a teenager – and the Norwegian-American composer Ola Gjeilo's cinematic setting of Walt Whitman's uplifting "Song of the Universal." Singers from UUCB and the wider community join in this choral concert on Sunday, October 8, at 1:30 pm. With a professional string orchestra and outstanding soloists we'll share these two large works and a variety of shorter, intimate gems in a fundraising event for UUCB's general fund. Tickets \$20 and \$10, available at the door.

Social Justice Sunday (Oct. 22)

Everyone is warmly invited to join an exciting series of events on October 22, 11 am to 2 pm, beginning with the service itself and continuing through lunch and a set of lively afternoon activities, for adults and children alike. The goals are to remind us of the many UU values expressed through our Social Justice Council (SJC) programs, to highlight the amazing work that's sponsored by the SJC, and to invite people to join our committees. One very special part of the celebration will be a film made by UUCB's Gail Simpson, an astounding short opera focused on social justice.

Do you know how many groups fall under the SJC umbrella? Included are The Accompaniment Team, Blessing Bags, Climate Justice, Fall Food Drive, Friends of the DIR, Good Neighbor, GRIP, HIP, Legislative Justice, LFDMC, POCC, ReadAloud, Standing With the Homeless, Summer Forum, Transylvania Partner Church, World Peace Committee, and WOWS. Wow!

And, as promised last month, here's what those acronyms stand for:

DIR - Developing Indigenous Resources
GRIP - Greater Richmond Interfaith Program
HIP - Honoring Indigenous Peoples
LFDMC - Literature, Film, Drama & Music Contingent
POCC - People of Color Caucus
WOWS - Working to Overcome White Supremacy

So, be sure to set aside that Sunday to be inspired, to learn about SJC's upcoming projects, to consider SJC activities you may want to join – AND to enjoy the afternoon's lunch, games, music, and dancing!

GRIP Harmony Walk (Oct. 28)

The Harmony Walk is GRIP's most high-profile and biggest yearly community fundraising event, and has been going on in Richmond since 1986. This year's event will be in Nicholl Park and will include a barbecue, music, guest speakers, vendor booths, kids' activities, and a raffle drawing. Attendees can take a short, 1-mile-or-so walk from Nicholl Park down to the GRIP shelter and back. Watch for more details about how you can help.

Lawrence Lecture (Nov. 10)

Save the Date: Matthew Fox's Lawrence Lecture is Friday, November 10

In 1978, Lawrence Berger gifted our organization \$8,000 for the purpose of establishing the Lawrence Lecture. The program is intended to bring a speaker to our campus who will attract a community audience with the "primary intent of inquiring into the nature of religion (either organized and codified or in a generic conceptual sense) in a world of accelerating technological and social change as well as one of sharpening human crisis and conflicting social values." (from the Charter) Hmmm, does that sound like now?

From the 1992 Organization and Administrative Policy, the Statement of Purpose includes, "More specifically the range of such an inquiry might involve not only exploring the role of religion (again institutionally or generally), but also the actual difference its presence or absence makes in the life of the individual or society, either as a sociological and value-oriented phenomenon or as a spiritual and conscious awakening force."

This year noted spiritual theologian Matthew Fox will speak to us in person on Friday, November 10, at 7 pm in the Sanctuary. Perhaps he is most known for his 95 Theses, or "faith observations" that he posted on the church in Wittenberg, Germany in 2005 like Martin Luther did so long ago.

The Lawrence Lecture Committee invites you to join us, and most importantly, asks you to spread the word to your communities so we can honor this tradition as we come out of COVID (in fits and starts) and seek to come together again.

Climate Justice Committee (CJC)

The CJC has heard members ask what they can do personally to reduce global warming. The following article is on adopting heat pump water heaters, one of the most impactful steps a household can take. Learn about more things you can do at the CJC table during the Social Justice Sunday on October 22.

UUCB's June Good Neighbor, SunWork Renewable Energy Projects, a local nonprofit, installs solar panels and heat pump water heaters (HPWHs) at lower costs by training volunteers to help, saving residents roughly \$1,000 per project.

HPWHs, a powerful tool for fighting global warming, reduce a household's greenhouse gas emissions by about one ton each year. Current incentives and SunWork's low costs can make them very affordable—sometimes cheaper than installing a gas water heater.

"It can cost as little as a few hundred dollars," says Reuben Veek, SunWork's founder.

The federal tax credit via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) covers 30% of an HPWH project up to \$2,000, and there are additional regional rebates.

Electric HPWHs work like a refrigerator in reverse, transferring heat from the ambient air to water, making them three to four times as efficient as gas heaters.

"For every 1 kWh of energy input, HPWH's provide 3 kWh of heat output," says Wei-Tai Kwok, renewable energy expert. "That's the 'magic' of not needing combustion."

Plus, utilities costs of running an HPWH are less than gas, year after year. But it takes some preparation to be ready to get one.

"Often, a water heater at the end of its life will leak and flood the basement, and the residents want hot water right away. So, they call a contractor who doesn't know about HPWHs or rebates, and they end up just getting another gas water heater," says Mr. Kwok.

Costs vary widely for individual projects, and though more large rebates are expected in the fall, only some projects will be low cost. It's worth getting to know your options now. SunWork (www.sunwork.org) even handles permitting and rebates, but they only do installations in easy locations, e.g., in garages. Contact them to see if you qualify.

Freestone Oversight Committee

The Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) is comprised of Beth Pollard (Board Rep), David Wemmer (Freestone Committee Rep), Alan Davis (Freestone Committee Rep), Tom Tripp, Susan Lankford, and Larry Nagel. August FOC actions and September 6 Board of Trustees review and actions included:

- **Fundraising Guidelines** – The FOC has approved fundraising guidelines with the express intent of minimizing the competition between UUCB fundraising events and Freestone fundraising events.
- **Conservation Easements** – The Freestone Committee has determined that the best way of pursuing a conservation easement is by partnering with a land trust. Alan Davis is pursuing various land trusts to assess interest. Applications must be submitted by the next couple of months to comply with the congregational resolution. As reported to the Board, the FOC is authorizing conservation easement applications to be signed by the Executive Director.
- **Encroachment** – The Board requested that the FOC continue to investigate possible encroachment onto the Freestone property by one of the neighbors and to recommend possible solutions.
- **Possible sale of two of the three Freestone lots** – the Freestone Committee originally voted to list the raw land lots 1 and 2 for sale to raise funds to meet the congregational resolution requirement of raising \$250,000 by December 1, 2024. That decision later was postponed until the end of October 2023. The Board requested that the FOC and the Freestone Committee develop a rough estimate of the value of the lots.
- The Board clarified the meaning of Paragraph 12 of the Congregational resolution, which reads that "the total funds raised by the sale of the undeveloped parcels and/or other funds raised [must] exceed \$250,000 by December 1, 2024." After some discussion, notably on time lags between approval of conservation easements and receipt of funds, the Board established that it would accept government obligation of funds as constituting "funds raised."

If you have any questions, please e-mail us at FOC@UUCB.org.

Family Ministry

October is going to be an exciting month for Family Ministry and Religious Education at UUCB. In Religious Education on **Sunday October 1** and **Sunday October 8, Grades K–3** will participate in “World of Wonder: A Program on the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism” and **Grades 4–12** will be exploring UU Principles and Shared Values through hands-on activities in three areas: nature/being outside, service, and art/music. We are also working on providing our youngest UU members that attend childcare with their own Pre-School Aged UU themed RE program.

On **Sunday October 15** we will hold “Celebration Chapel,” where children and adults will make signs for the “Social Justice Sunday” (**which is happening on October 22**). And on **Sunday October 28** we will have a special Intergenerational Service that honors our Ancestors. After service, we will have a community wide Fall Festival that will include a jumpy house, fall games, cotton candy and popcorn machines, yummy snacks, and more! October is a great time to be part of our UUCB Family!

Partner Church

Social Justice Sunday is happening on October 22, and the Transylvanian Partner Church Committee will be there, of course. Anne Greenwood has just returned from a visit to Transylvania, and she has a lot of pictures to share. She has plenty of news about our partners in Homoródújfalú, as well as the International Association for Religious Freedom, which held its convocation in Kolozsvár.

Stop by our table and find out what we (and you!) can do in the coming year to support the village and its students. In the meantime you can reach Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net.

Social Justice

The Social Justice Council needs your help in selecting our 2024 roster for the Good Neighbor program. Are you familiar with any local nonprofits that might need some recognition and a monetary boost? We need your help to identify nonprofits who might benefit from our donations!

The Good Neighbor Program at UUCB is an integral part of our congregation’s community outreach. Each month we share our offerings from the Sunday worship services with nonprofit organizations serving the Alameda and Contra Costa communities, particularly those serving people in need. A different group is selected each month to receive these much-needed funds. Each year, through the generosity of UUCB members, friends, and Sunday visitors, over \$20,000 is distributed to these organizations.

These are the guidelines for any organization you nominate:

- It must be a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that promotes social, economic, racial and/or environmental justice or peace. The nonprofit should not have mainstream support.
- The nonprofit must be a local Alameda or Contra Costa County organization (no national groups)
- UU social justice initiatives or organizations may also be included.

We are collecting nominations through the month of October. Please contact Natalie Campbell at nataliehcampbell@yahoo.com with your nominations. In your email, **please include these details:**

1. Name of the organization
2. Name of contact person at organization
3. Phone number and email of contact person
4. Website address of organization
5. Mission statement of organization
6. Brief statement as to why you feel this organization needs our support.

We will be taking nominations until **October 31**. We will compile the list and take a vote in December at the Social Justice Council meeting. Send an email with the requested information to Natalie Campbell at nataliehcampbell@yahoo.com by October 31.

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 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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