
September 2023

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Vol. 82 #9

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

From the Minister

And so we've begun!

Thank you for all you've done to welcome me back to the UU Church of Berkeley. I've been particularly struck by so many of you greeting me, "Welcome home!" It does indeed feel like a joyful homecoming, both a return to a place I have known and loved, and an arriving at a long-awaited destination, a place where I hope to kick the dirt off my traveler's shoes and settle in, get comfortable. Home.

Church has always felt like a second home in my life. I remember the sleepovers we had in the church I grew up in. The delight in exploring the narthex with stained glass images of beloved church ancestors keeping an eye on us. As teens, packing ourselves into the newly installed elevator and dissolving into a giggling mass of puppy pile. Preparing for our coming-of-age rite of passage by hunting together for a key in the pitch black sanctuary, finding it after tedious hours of searching, and claiming our place as key-holders, inheritors of that sacred space.

So it's fitting that we begin this new ministry together with a worship series using home as a metaphor for our shared theological house. As Unitarian Universalists we talk a great deal about each of us finding our own way and building our own theologies. We take great stock in our individual abilities to discern what is beautiful, true and good through our own direct experiences. But we also inherit a theological house that has been built by those who came before us. A house that we renovate, generation by generation, making the house we have arrived in our home. In *A House for Hope*, Rebecca Parker and John Buehrens offer a way to understand each element of the house—the walls, the foundation, the roof, the windows, the doors, and surrounding garden—as a metaphor for a dimension of systematic theology. We begin this church year by exploring together this house we've inherited.

With you on the journey,
Rev. Marcus Liefert



September Services

Sundays 11 am

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

September 3

Unitarian Universalism and building a Home for Modern Spirituality, Rev. Charlotte Cramer

September 10

Holding Each Other Up. Rev. Marcus

September 17

Doorways into Paradise, Rev. Marcus

September 24

The Sheltering Roof, Rev. Marcus

Family Ministry

September 3

Parents Discussion Group (9:30)
All RE Ages Nature Hike (11 am)

September 10

RE Kickoff!!

September 17

Celebration Chapel

September 24

All Ages Worship Service

Coffee Hour

Sundays at Noon
In person in the Social Hall

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Sundays at 9:30 am

September 17 – Dr. Karen Voorhees presents “A Report From Tomorrow, or Why I Am Still (Cautiously) Optimistic About the Future.” At age 15, Karen fell in love with Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, which soon blossomed into a fascination with the European Middle Ages. A decade and a half later, during her two Fulbright years in Munich as a doctoral candidate in History of Art and Medieval Studies, she discovered her spiritual path, and has been meditating daily ever since. She returned to Berkeley and left academia to pursue her spiritual path. This eventually included incorporating and managing a not-for-profit organization on behalf of her spiritual teacher. From 2003 through 2016, much of her life was dedicated to late-life and hospice care for eight elderly relatives. Her passion for big history, the humanities, and spirituality have remained with her all through, and are now driving her current career as essayist and visionary novelist.

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

Good Neighbor in May

East Bay Center for the Blind

Website: <https://www.eastbaycenterfortheblind.org>

Mission: The East Bay Center for the Blind offers services and social activities to a diverse group of people who are blind or low vision, many of whom are not assisted by other agencies. They give particular attention to individual needs and circumstances.

Special Events

Sept. 2-3 (10 am - 2 pm)
Upscale Rummage Sale

Sept. 3 @ 9:30 am
Parents’ Discussion Group

Sept. 9
New Minister & Congregation Workshop

Sept. 10
Religious Education Kickoff!

Sept. 15-22
Berkeley Shakes performs King Lear at UUCB

Sept. 16 @ 1 pm
People of Color Caucus meeting

Sept. 17 @ 9 am
Adult OWL

Sept. 23 @ 7 pm
Bryan Baker & Friends

Sept. 24 @ 1 pm
Working to Overcome White Supremacy (WOWS)

Sept. 26 @ 10:15 am
Volunteer for the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program Lunch Service

Sept. 29
Freestone Fundraising Dinner

Announcements

Board Listening Presence

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

Bryan Baker & Friends

September 23 @ 7 pm

Bryan will be joined by the expressive and warm-toned chamber choir Serenade in a program that compares and contrasts piano pieces and choral music in twos and threes. Chopin and Debussy, Samuel Barber, Eric Whitacre, and many more.

Upcoming Events

October 22: Social Justice Sunday

All are invited – children warmly included – to join an exciting series of events, beginning with the service itself and continuing through lunch and afternoon activities. We aim to highlight the many UU values expressed through our Social Justice Council (SJC) programs and the amazing work that's sponsored by the SJC, inviting folks to join whichever programs they find interesting. You may not realize how many groups fall under the SJC umbrella: Blessing Bags, Climate Justice, Fall Food Drive, Good Neighbor, GRIP, HIP, Legislative Justice, POCC, ReadAloud, Standing With the Homeless, Summer Forum, Transylvania Partner Church, World Peace Committee, and WOWS. See how many acronyms you can identify! We'll translate in the October Beacon. Meanwhile, please set aside that Sunday from 11 am to 2 pm for a time to be inspired, to be educated about SJC's upcoming projects, and to consider activities of the SJC you may want to join.

October 29: GRIP Harmony Walk Picnic

This year's Harmony Walk will be a midday picnic. No need to register, walk/run, or get sponsors. Just come enjoy a day at Nicholl Park with the GRIP community! Volunteers will be grilling burgers, hotdogs, veggies, and other goodies, and serving special treats from sponsoring local businesses. Bring picnic blankets and chairs, kick back, relax, and enjoy the music, guest speakers, food, vendor booths, kids' activities, and the raffle drawing. There will be an optional short walk from Nicholl Park over to the GRIP shelter for anyone who would like a tour. Contact Ladie Malek or Ray Westergard for more information.

Executive Director Notes

Tess Snook O'Riva

Boundary Issues in Congregations

I recently attended a training on boundaries. Most of the scenarios focused on ministers, but I found the discussions very enlightening and fruitful. I feel very lucky that we don't have a lot of the boundary problems many others do. I also feel like people generally respect other people's boundaries, preferences, and requests.

That said, we all sometimes make assumptions about other people's comfort levels. Did you find your behavior changing with the color-coded lanyards? Mine sure did. And they helped some people feel more comfortable turning down a hug when needed.

I also learned that the boundaries discussion includes topics of culture, interpersonal dynamics, different kinds of power and influence, and surprisingly to me, self-care. If we are a culture of huggers, and someone doesn't like them, do we make it easy to say no? We have had people approach staff and identify themselves as a member before making a special request. Do we bend the rules based on who's asking? And I don't know about you, but I dislike conflict immensely. So when someone has crossed, or is too close to, one of my boundaries, I try to avoid confrontation. As you know, avoiding difficult conversations makes the problem worse.

So what's the solution? The trainer was very direct. "It is your responsibility to make and enforce your own boundaries." So, I am working on communicating my boundaries better, and making fewer exceptions. I don't usually work after 6 or on weekends, so I won't get back to you at those times unless it's actually urgent. I don't handle worship or programs, so I will defer those issues to Marcus. We have extremely capable administrative staff, so please turn to them first. I will be shutting my door when I'm working on a project, and that means I can't speak with you at that moment. When we do speak, I will set a limit on how much time I can spare.

And the self-care part of good boundaries? That's because exhausted, burned-out people can't hold their boundaries. The subtitle of the training was "Helping Good People Not Do Stupid Things." So I'm going to be smart, take care of myself, and take time off. I'll be encouraging staff to do the same. But don't worry, I'll be back after Burning Man! – Tess, ed@uucb.org.

From the Board of Trustees

New Beginnings

For me, a new year has begun— the school year, that is! It is a universal moment of transition that we've all experienced, a time of both excitement and trepidation. For students, parents, and educators alike, it signifies a fresh start—a chance to learn, explore, and develop new skills. Neither of my kids are moving up to a new school this year, so their thoughts alternate between thinking that things will be pretty much the same, and yet also completely different. It's a moment not unlike what our congregation is experiencing as we welcome (home!) with open arms and hearts our newly settled minister, Rev. Marcus Liefert.

A new year and a new minister mark a season of change rife with possibilities and opportunities. Like my kids, I've been thinking about how my own church experience might be kind of the same, and yet completely different. The Family Ministry Committee and my fellow teachers have been meeting and planning a new approach to RE this year. We're excited, and a little nervous, about how it's going to unfold.

A new year and a new minister also mean the start of a whole new Sunday worship experience. Rev. Marcus is bringing his own deep wisdom, lived experiences, and fresh perspectives to Sunday morning, and I'm here for it! As someone who works behind the scenes in Worship Production, it's exciting to be supporting a new vision, but it will surely require adjusting to a new style.

A new year also means that new committees are forming, and those positions need to be filled. As a Board Member, recruiting new volunteers is always a bit daunting, but perhaps the excitement of potentially working with our new minister will make everyone clamor to participate? You never know!

As we stand on this threshold of new beginnings, I invite everyone in our beloved community to embrace the new: new friendships, new experiences, new roles and responsibilities, new challenges, a new Article II from the UUA! And most definitely, our new minister, Rev. Marcus, as we forge this new chapter, together.

Pier Sun Ho
Board Co-President

Board of Trustees August 2023 Actions

1. **Rev. Marcus:** Welcomed Rev. Marcus to his first official Board of Trustees meeting!
2. **Executive Director Sabbatical:** Supported the application of Executive Director Tess Snook O'Riva to the non-profit O2 Initiatives for funding a three-month sabbatical in Summer 2024.
3. **Lease space:** Respectfully declined to enter into negotiations with the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District for modifying and leasing land on which it would locate a temporary or longer-term police station.

Please contact secretary@uucb.org for a link to previous board meeting recordings.



Family Ministry

On Sundays, families begin together in worship service. Kids, grades K – 12, then have the opportunity to leave for Religious Exploration (RE) or Celebration Chapel (CC) after the “Time for All Ages.” RE or CC will run approximately 11:15 am – 12:15 pm. Childcare is provided in the nursery every Sunday for younger children. Children of any age are always welcome to stay in the worship service with their families.

Religious Exploration (RE) will be offered the 1st & 2nd Sundays of each month for grades K-12.

- Grades K- 3rd will be using the UUA curriculum “World of Wonder: A Program on the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism”
- Grades 4th – 12th will be exploring UU Principles and Shared Values through hands-on activities in three areas: nature/being outside, service, & art/music.

Celebration Chapel is a youth-centered, all-ages service that includes music by the children's choir and youth-focused spiritual teachings and experiences, and takes place the 3rd Sunday of each month.

Parent/Grandparent Discussion Group meets on the 1st Sunday of each month at 9:30 am. We welcome parents and grandparents at all stages of the parenting journey. Drop-ins welcome!

Youth & Children's Choir (YCC) meets Sundays, 10 am. YCC is open to all children and youth, ages 5½ and up, and prior musical experience is not required. Email Teacher Katie for questions: ktlipka@gmail.com. Come sing with us!

Youth Group (middle & high school) meet monthly to have fun and build community! Dates and details about youth group coming soon!

Music Matters

I am very excited to join with Marcus Liefert in creating new energy in services. I really admire his gentle and wise ways. The choirs and music program will be in full swing and abundantly enthusiastic come September. We've already been rehearsing.

I started as your Director of Music a full 20 years ago. It's been full of wonderful, uplifting services and

events, and I've met countless people I admire and respect, and so many I hold dear. All along that way, the music program has been tasked with raising money. Each year we put on a variety of events to raise money, not for the music program, but for the entire church. All of our fundraisers bring in money for UUCB's general fund. This year we've been asked to raise \$12,000 and, as the saying goes, we can't do it without you! The choir, the soloists, Katya and I, and the Music Committee work very hard to put on events that will be fun and high-quality so that you can really enjoy attending. We very much hope you will join us in our efforts to support the church.

Our first fundraiser is on September 23 at 7pm, and it's my 65th birthday concert. I'll be joined by the expressive and warm-toned chamber choir Serenade in a program that compares and contrasts piano pieces and choral music in twos and threes. Chopin and Debussy, Samuel Barber, and Eric Whitacre, and many more.

Our choir and singers from the wider community join in the program titled “Song of the Universal” on October 8, Sunday, at 1:30. With a professional string orchestra, we'll share Schubert's immortal melodic gift in his lovely, gentle *Mass in G*, and the Norwegian-American composer Ola Gjeilo's setting of Walt Whitman's uplifting “Song of the Universal.”

Yours in harmony, Bryan

Partner Church

As we start a new church and with a new minister, let's remind ourselves of the mission of the Transylvanian Partner Church Committee: “We endeavor to join with our partners in faith in Homoródújfalú to exchange the stories of our lives, to deepen our faith, to share our learnings and resources in order to support each other's dreams.” Much as our own Unitarian Universalist Association has changed significantly in recent years, so has the Hungarian Unitarian Church since the Transylvanian and Hungarian branches merged into one.

Here are some of our goals and means to fulfill our mission:

- Educate our own congregation about our partner church and deepen our mutual understanding of each other's churches including historical roots, culture, and current issues.

- Provide financial support for mutually agreed upon projects and continue to support the Village Education Fund.
- Support and encourage our partner church congregation as their nation, Romania, strives to integrate into NATO and the European Union.
- Children, youth, and adults experience and explore the wisdom that all religions have to offer and can express UU principles and values.
- Congregants can fulfill the UU values of social and environmental justice, and community organizations experience UUCB as an active and dynamic partner in this work.

Contact: Stephanie Ann Blythe
 at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood
 at annegt1@sbcglobal.net

Freestone Committee

The Freestone Committee continues to need volunteers to help out with a range of tasks. If we are to be successful we need additional support. We are sure we can find something for you to help with that would fit your skill set. Please contact David Wemmer at david.wemmer12@gmail.com.

Freestone Oversight Committee

by Larry Nagel

The Freestone Oversight Committee is comprised of Beth Pollard (Board Rep), David Wemmer (Freestone Committee Rep), Alan Davis (Freestone Committee Rep), Tom Tripp, Susan Lankford, and Larry Nagel. We are closely monitoring the following developments which have happened since our last report:

- Conservation Easements – The Freestone Committee received an email from Karl Kraft, the USDA biologist responsible for wetlands conservation easements. Karl said that, based on Chase Garcia’s site visit and photos and existing soils mapping our properties, we have a very limited potential wetland footprint in the area and a wetland based easement has been classified as low priority. At this time, only high and medium ranked wetland projects are being processed. Therefore, Karl will not be performing a site

assessment. The Freestone Committee will continue to pursue other easements with the USDA and other agencies.

- At our last meeting, the Freestone Oversight Committee decided that the rummage sale would only be for the benefit of the general fund. The Oversight Committee has asked the Freestone Committee for a fundraising activity proposal, and anticipates engaging with the Board of Trustees about parameters for the Freestone Committee in seeking congregant donations.
- We are happy to report that Sonoma County has issued UUCB a Vacation Rental Permit (VRP) so that we can rent out the Freestone retreat in the future if we decide that is an appropriate thing to do.
- The Freestone Oversight Committee continues to urge the Freestone Committee to develop a plan for the Freestone Renovation Project with a timeline and cost estimate so that we can monitor the progress of the project and keep the Board of Trustees informed. There is an engineering firm that is working on designs for roadway improvements, pending further input from the fire department, and a structural engineering firm that is working on analysis and approaches for dome repairs; these will provide more specific information for cost estimating.
- At present, the highest priority Freestone project is fuel reduction: mowing grass and clearing brush as prescribed by the fire department. Several work parties have happened, and hopefully this project will be completed in September 2023.

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

Date	Sunday Family Ministry programming	Other events
8/27	All Ages Service – Water Communion	Harvest Celebration
9/3	Parents Discussion Group (9:30 am) All ages activity	Labor Day weekend Upscale Rummage Sale
9/10	Religious Exploration (RE) Kickoff!!	Solano Stroll
9/17	Celebration Chapel	
9/24	All Ages worship service	
10/1	Parents Discussion Group (9:30 am) Religious Exploration (RE)	
10/8	Religious Exploration (RE)	
10/15	Celebration Chapel	
10/22	Activities provided by Social Justice	Social Justice Sunday
10/29	Halloween/Samhain activities	New Member Sunday
11/5	Parents Discussion Group (9:30 am) Religious Exploration (RE)	
11/12	Religious Exploration (RE)	
11/19	Celebration Chapel	Food drive
11/26	All Ages worship service	Thanksgiving
12/3	Parents Discussion Group (9:30 am) Religious Exploration (RE)	Holiday Fair
12/10	Religious Exploration (RE)	Holiday Fair
12/17	All Ages Pageant	Solstice Labyrinth
12/24	Christmas Eve service	Christmas Cookies
12/31	All Ages worship service	New Year's Eve

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:

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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