
December 2023

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Church of Berkeley Vol. 82 #12

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

From the Minister

My neighbor Will likes to decorate for the holidays. Actually, that's an understatement. Will decorates to the extent that he has to be careful how long the decorations are up because of the possible repercussions in his PG&E bill. Santa and all the reindeer on the roof are just the beginning. His house is swallowed up by the shimmering lights that flash in a variety of technicolor patterns across the walls, the giant blow-up candy canes towering over the chimney, and the large section of yard dedicated to a Star Wars Christmas jamboree. It's truly an act of love and neighborhood delight, but on my bah humbug nights it can also be a reminder of how a season of turning inward has been dazzled to death in our electric age of always on, always flickering, always more.

In my own life, it's easy for the darkest time of year to get so crowded with activities, lights, and holiday cheer that I miss the invitation to stillness this time of year provides. I need religious community to offer a balance, so our theme for worship this month will be Listening to the Dark: Finding Depth Amidst the Frenetic. As we wait in the dark and make quiet space among us, as we tell ancient stories and make room for mystery, what truths might we find have been waiting for our soft attention? Deep listening is about a quality of a presence that brings us into closer contact with the conversational nature of reality. This holiday season let's discover again the darkness between the lights, the silence between the notes, the depth that opens in us with every passing breath.

With you in the twinkle lights and the darkness too,
Rev. Marcus Liefert



December Services

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

December 3 @ 11 am

Listening for the Shy Soul

December 10 @ 11 am

Listening for the Deep Dark

December 17 @ 11 am

Listening for the Still Joy

December 24 @ 5 & 10 pm

Listening for the Angel's Call

December 31 @ 11 am

Topic TBD

Religious Education

Classes December 3 & 10,
Celebration Chapel December 17

Coffee/Light Lunch

Sundays after the Service, in
the Social Hall (except
December 10, Holiday Fair day)

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Sundays at 9:15 am on Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/99027634430>

December 10 – Spiritual Reflections about the Climate Crisis. Kiran Rana became dissatisfied with conventional religious ideas at an early age. Eventually he discovered Sufism and has been a student and teacher of the Sufi Way for many years. Prior to retirement, Kiran was a publisher of self-help books on health and personal growth. Currently he is also a member of the choir of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland. In Person and on Zoom

December 17 – Fire Rituals: Theory and Practice presented by Jim Gasperini. From solstice bonfires to the UU chalice to candles on a birthday cake, we have long used fire to signal how we take actions with serious intent. As we enter a season of ubiquitous ceremonial flames, what is it about fire that makes it so central to ritual practice? Jim Gasperini is currently completing a cultural history of fire, *Fire in the Mind—from the Burning Bush to Burning Man, How We Imagine Fire*. A seven-year project, the book began as a topic for a summertime sermon at UUCB.

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 (in person on the 3rd Sunday)

Please check the Church Calendar for updated information uucb.org/calendar

Good Neighbor in December

Safe Return Project. Website: <https://www.safereturnprj.org>

Mission: The Safe Return Project is invested in building a base of power at the civic, social, and economic levels of formerly incarcerated persons across the State of California, addressing the root causes of poverty and the impact that the criminal justice system has had on Black people and communities of color.

Special Events

December 1 @ 7 pm

Tree Trimming, Cookie Exchange, and Caroling Party

December 3 during Service

Blessing of Donations for the Richmond Emergency Food Pantry

December 9

1 pm Holiday Bags/Cards of Remembrance

2 pm Death Café (more info on p. 6)

December 10

Noon-5:30 pm Holiday Fair

4 pm Messiah Sing-Along

December 12 @ 7 pm

What I Wish My Parents Knew film screening

December 17 @ 7 pm

Mist Tree Moon Circle

December 21

4-6 pm Build Tinsel Labyrinth

6 pm Winter Solstice Service

December 24

5 pm Intergenerational Christmas Eve Service (cookies before & after)

10 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

Weekly Events

For up-to-date details: uucb.org/weekahead.

Mondays

9 am Write For Your Life

9:30 am Women's Meditation Group

Tuesdays

10 am Improving Your Balance through Tai Chi

12:15 pm Applied UU Buddhist Sangha

Wednesdays

10 am Walk & Talk Group

10:30 am Aging with Grace

Thursdays

5 pm Javanese Gamelan

7 pm Choir Rehearsal

Fridays

10 am Improving Your Balance through Tai Chi

Monthly Events & Meetings

Sunday

9:30 am Parents Discussion Group (1st Sunday)

11 am Religious Education (1st & 2nd Sunday)

11:30 am Celebration Chapel (3rd Sunday)

1 pm WOWS Working to Overcome White Supremacy (3rd Sunday)

Monday

11 am Textile & Art (2nd Monday)

Tuesday

10:15 am Volunteer Lunch Program at GRIP (4th Tuesday)

Wednesday

7:15 pm Board of Trustees (1st Wednesday)

7 pm Social Justice Council (2nd Wednesday)

7 pm Program Council (3rd Wednesday)

Friday

11 am Textile & Art (4th Friday)

Saturday

1 pm POCC People of Color Caucus (3rd Saturday)

4 pm Parents' Night Out (3rd Saturday)

7 pm Youth Gathering (3rd Saturday)

Announcements

Board Listening Presence

Michael Armstrong: (510) 219-3847

michaelarmstrong2494@comcast.net

Food Drive Donations Blessing Dec. 3

Please join in UUCB's Food Drive for the Richmond Emergency Food Pantry through November and join in blessing our donations on December 3. This year we're emphasizing monetary donations as the most effective way to support the Pantry's needs. Consider donating what you spend in a week on groceries.

Messiah Sing-Along & Holiday Fair Dec. 10

For the first time, our Holiday Fair will happen the same day as our famous Messiah Sing-Along for a unique singing and shopping experience! The Holiday Fair will start at noon with holiday decorations, gift wrap, crafts, recycled "giftables," jewelry, food gifts, and plants for sale. It will go through the intermission of the Messiah Sing-Along, a participatory performance of Handel's masterpiece oratorio *Messiah*, featuring the Hallelujah chorus. There is an orchestra, choir and soloists, and the audience is invited to sing along with the choruses.

***What I Wish My Parents Knew* Screening**

On Dec. 12 at 7 pm we will screen a 45-minute film that explores the inner struggle of children battling depression and anxiety in silence, followed by a 45-minute in-depth discussion facilitated by a mental health practitioner. This session provides an opportunity for attendees to ask questions, share their struggles, and gain insights on supporting youth mental well-being. [Please RSVP.](#)

Holiday Tinsel Labyrinth

We invite you to come December 21 and help create our tinsel labyrinth any time between 4-6 pm, then join in celebrating the Winter Solstice and walking the Labyrinth. There will be treats to eat for those who will hangout all afternoon and evening.

Executive Director Notes

Tess Snook O'Riva

One of the things that really strikes me about Rev. Marcus' worship themes is how timely and appropriate they are. Inheritance and harvest are definitely on my mind right now. It's like a horoscope, only better!

Some of my job is made challenging by what we have inherited. We have all the original blueprints of the building, but that doesn't necessarily reflect how it was actually built, let alone all the changes that have been made in the last 60 years. The documentation might be somewhere, on paper in a closet I haven't opened yet, but we rely on people's memories often. And when no one knows the answer, it's time to play detective and do a forensic investigation! You can bet that we are documenting everything to relieve future generations from ever wondering, "What did they do and why?"

The vast majority of what we have inherited, this building, these processes, this loving congregation – we did not build. But we are here to preserve that which still serves us and improve and enhance what we can to elevate our congregation and our mission going forward.

And the harvest? I have an amazing staff that is a joy to work with and gets things done. We all feel recognized and supported by the congregation. And the foundations have been laid for an even brighter future. Hopefully, future generations will joyously harvest the loving fruits of our labors today. Celebrate the season!

Tess, ed@uucb.org.

About Our Website

Whether you are new to UUCB or have been around for years, keep uucb.org in mind as a place for answers to any questions you may have. We recently added a section to the home page, "Events at UUCB," where you can quickly access events in the church calendar related to one of the following:

[Family Ministry](#)

[Music & the Arts](#)

[Social Justice](#)

[Adult Religious Education & Exploration](#)

Holiday Remembrance Activities

Pastoral Care Team

We invite you to join us in Loving Community activities to reach out to "Elders and Others" to remind them we are thinking of them with love and appreciation and wish them well, especially in this season that may feel blue and/or stressful.

You may:

- Remind us of persons for whom 2023 has been a challenging year and/or the holidays a challenging season. We do have a listing of those 80 and better, and/or
- Donate holiday cards and put them in the box in the office near the mailboxes before December 6, in time for sorting, and/or
- Sort cards, December 6-8, time and date to be determined by volunteers, and/or
- Children and families may make and decorate cookies, draw and/or write greetings to insert in cards and holiday bags, on Saturday, December 9 from 1-4pm, and/or
- Address holiday cards and write and insert messages, on Saturday, December 9, from 1-4pm, and/or
- Decorate and fill holiday bags of remembrance for those with the most birthdays and years of potential giving to our UUCB community and others we especially want to feel remembered, on Saturday, December 9, from 1-4 pm, and/or
- Deliver holiday bags and enjoy a visit, from Sunday, December 10 to December 23.

We look forward to hearing from you ways you'd like to participate in these important holiday pastoral care projects. You'll enjoy making and deepening relationships and making a positive contribution to the holidays for members of our Loving Community. Please email pastoralcare@uucb.org or speak with one of us.

With much appreciation for all the ways you care and serve throughout the year,

Melissa Rosales, Family Ministry, and Barbara Cullinane, Pastoral Associates.

Family Ministry

Happy Holidays from Family Ministry! It will be an exciting month of Celebration at UUCB! In Religious Education, **K-3rd grade** will continue their journey into the "World of Wonder" Tapestry of Faith program.

4th-12th graders will learn about Hanukkah as a holiday that represents defiant activism and an insistence on religious freedom. On **December 9**, Melissa Rosales and Barbara Cullinane will create Bags of Remembrance with gingerbread cookies. On **December 10**, 4th-12th graders will bake cookies to sell at the Holiday Fair. Youth Group will have their Holiday Party/Gathering on Saturday **December 16**. Parents will also get the chance to finish up holiday shopping or just celebrate the season on **December 16** while UUCB watches their kids during Parent's Night Out for FREE; pizza for children is included. All are invited to Celebration Chapel on **December 17**, where we will celebrate the Winter Solstice with a tale of the Winter King and the Holly King and holiday crafts. We will build a Tinsel Labyrinth at 4 pm on **December 21** and have a snack, followed by a Winter Solstice Service/Ritual at 6 pm. On **Christmas Eve**, join us for our annual Holiday Pageant and Christmas Eve service at 5 pm, then cookies and cider! Can't wait to Deck the Halls in celebration with you at UUCB this season!

Social Justice

There will be no Social Justice Council meeting in December, but you have until December 3 to vote on Good Neighbor organizations for next year.

Literature, Film, Drama and Music Contingent of the Social Justice Council

We're back! We had a memorable presentation Nov. 12 by the Honoring Indigenous Peoples group, with members selecting readings and special guests speaking from the heart.

Our next event will be an in-person film showing in the Sanctuary Jan. 14, 2024, 1-2:30 pm: *Resurrecting Love: The Cemetery That Can Heal a Nation*. This is a documentary about reclaiming an African American burial site, one of many almost lost to neglect but never forgotten. It will be followed by a discussion with (we hope) Aldo Billingslea (Producer) and China & Ben Galland (the author and the director/editor,

respectively). This event will not be on Zoom or livestreamed.

Please let us know if your group or committee has a video, book, or play to recommend or present for later in the Spring 2024. We wish we could have organized a group livestream for Rhiannon Giddens's opera *Omar*, at the SF Opera in November; it was a very beautiful but very challenging piece of work for that medium.

Partner Church

Did a visit to our table on Social Justice Sunday or Anne Greenwood's recent Personal Theology talk with Jay Atkinson stir an interest in traveling to Transylvania and our partner church in Homoródújfalu? Well, you're in luck! Who knew that the UU spirits would smile on us and offer us the opportunity to make a pilgrimage in September 2024?

The International Convocation of UU Women will be gathering in Kolozsvár on September 5-8 next year for their Fourth International Convocation. There will be a pre-convo tour available to many historic sites in Transylvania, many having deep Unitarian connections. One might expect there will be some activities for the men to do while the women are meeting. And after the convo, why don't we all travel down to Homoródújfalu for a visit with our friends and partners in the Unitarian faith? Here's a link to the convo website: 4th Convo 2024 September (intlwomenconvo.org)

These trips take a lot of planning. If you're interested, let us know sooner rather than later. If you're not sure or have questions, we're here to answer those concerns. These opportunities don't come around very often, so make the most of this one! And you know who you can talk to: Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net.

Lost and Found

Missing something you may have left at UUCB? Water bottles seem to get left behind the most. You can check the Lost & Found box in the office hallway, second lower cabinet, or for food-related items check just inside the kitchen door.

From the Board of Trustees

As the Fall Season wraps its arms around us, it beckons us to enjoy the crisp fragrance of the outdoors, to absorb the change in seasons. Soon it will be winter. And as the rain nurtures our part of the world, I pause to give thanks. One of the things I am most thankful for is, of course, our UUCB Community. I also give thanks for my role in calling to order the Nominating Committee, which shepherds the process of choosing new Board Members to replace those whose tenure is ending.

So I want to take this moment to recognize and thank Cordell Sloan, Bill Brown and Randall Hudson for not just their time on the Board, but their passion, curiosity, and especially their skill sets – which they used unerringly throughout their service. I'm in awe when one of these gentlemen provides insight on whatever subject presents itself. It's inspiring. Thank you again.

But that does leave 3 openings for our Nominating Committee to fill. As an active Board Member I thankfully do not have to choose candidates, per the bylaws – but I do get to call to order the meetings and provide support. It is a blessed and challenging job to cultivate a list of worthy candidates, and reach out to those in our UUCB Community to take on a new role like this. Fortunately, our current Board is strong, generous, diverse, forgiving – the perfect combination. With leadership provided by our Co-Presidents, Helen Tinsley-Jones and Pier Sun Ho, along with my fellow Board members, Reverend Marcus, Executive Director Tess Snook O'Riva – with administrative and financial support aptly provided by Selene Fabiano and Carolyn James – the new candidates have the perfect structure to flourish in their roles.

I want to also give thanks to our current Nominating Committee, listed alphabetically by last name: Lynne Cahoon, Don Klose, Michael Dewitt, Anita Mermel, Sandy Portillo-Robins, Ariel Smith-Iyer, Terry Stokes, Andrew Swan, Marta Tobey. Such an inspiring group.

I do realize that by the time this is published our nominees will have been presented in preparation for approval and induction next year. But I try not to jump too far ahead of myself, and as I noted at the beginning of this article, I will endeavor to stop and enjoy this time and this place, and the blessings it provides. Many thanks to my UUCB Community ...

Michael Armstrong, UUCB Board Vice President

Board of Trustees November 2023 Actions

1. **Endowment gift:** Confirmed the Endowment Committee recommendation that the bequest from the Petczo estate/estate of Ann Lane belongs in UUCB's permanent endowment fund.
2. **Recognition Task Force:** Accepted the Endowment Committee's recommendation to create a Recognition Task Force to think through, recommend, and implement how UUCB publicly acknowledges gifts of treasure (financial) and of time/creativity to UUCB and to the wider mission of our Congregation.
3. **Signatories:** Approved updated signatory permissions for the Mechanics Bank account.
4. **Transylvania Partner Church:** To strengthen relationships, endorsed having a few Board members – along with Anne Greenwood and Rev. Marcus – connect remotely/virtually with members of the council of UUCB's partner church in Transylvania sometime in the next few months.
5. **Crisis in Gaza & Israel:** Endorsed the Board distributing a link to UUA 10/17 statement, along with brief opening words drafted by a Board subcommittee.

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

What is a Death Café?

A Death Café is a group discussion of death with no agenda, objectives, or themes. It is not a grief support or counseling session but a way to think and talk about mortality. They started in the UK in 2011 and have quickly spread throughout Europe, North America, and Australasia. It will be in the Safir Room and will include refreshments. Dec. 9 @ 2 pm.

**UUCB wishes you a smooth and
pleasant holiday season.**

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

You are not alone.

In case of a pastoral emergency, you may contact Rev. Marcus Liefert at 510-525-0302 ext. 303 or revmarcus@uucb.org. He is always available for pastoral needs.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Covenant of Right Relations

Love guides this church.

The quest for truth and justice is its common purpose.

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

These things we covenant with one another.

MEMBERSHIP in this Unitarian Universalist congregation is open to all who see this church as their religious home and the principles for which the church stands as their own. People who wish to join participate in an “introduction to membership” session, sign the membership book, and commit to supporting this church through participation and financially. To become a member, please contact membership@uucb.org.

NEWSLETTER ITEM SUBMISSIONS: Submit announcements and articles by email to beacon@uucb.org. Due to limited space, we do not publish announcements for events occurring outside the church community. **The deadline for submissions** is the 15th of the month. **Questions?** Please email beacon@uucb.org. (Beacon is compiled and edited by Charis Domador.)

WEBSITE: <https://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.

Board of Trustees

Helen Tinsley-Jones, Co-President
Pier Sun Ho, Co-President
Michael Armstrong, Vice President
Selene Fabiano, Secretary
Carolyn James, Treasurer
Beth Pollard
Bill Brown
Randall Hudson
Cordell Sloan
Kay Fairwell
David Rosales

Executive Advisory Team

Tess Snook O’Riva (Executive Director and Convener)
Rev. Marcus Liefert
Heaven Walker (Director of Family Ministry & Lifelong Learning)

Program Council

Jean Gleason (Convener)
Robin Cooper (Family Ministry)
Victoria Bowen (Membership)
Lynne Cahoon (Buildings & Grounds)
Carol Carlisle (Social Justice)
Barbara Cullinane (Pastoral Care)
Marin Fischer, Virginia Frederick and Phyllis Van Kranenburgh (Music/Arts)
Jim Gasperini (Communications)
Ann Harlow (Fundraising and Hospitality)
Lonnie Moseley (Adult Religious Exploration)
Lenore Ralston (Chalice Circles and Finance)
Cordell Sloan (Board Liaison)

Staff (partial list)

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