

January 2025

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Vol. 84 #1

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

From the Minister

"A person will worship something, have no doubt about that," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming." When I read the opening paragraphs of former President Barack Obama's reflection on his leadership, *A Promised Land*, I was struck by how his framing of justice, pluralism and world community mirrors the way Unitarian Universalists have articulated our theological vision over the past several decades. I thought about the Sunday School at the little UU congregation in Hawaii that Obama's grandparents brought him to when he was growing up, and how our tradition has always had its greatest impact as an incubator for compelling ideas and courageous leaders.

In its Germanic roots, *Worship* comes from the idea of giving shape to worth. At our best, our worshipping helps to shape what our society is becoming. Time and again, movements have been incubated in our sanctuaries and meeting rooms. Transcendentalism transformed understandings of nature, inspired the first U.S. conservation efforts, and ignited Americans' interest in world religions. Unitarian educators pioneered approaches to child-center learning and led movements to expand public education and develop the first kindergartens. Humanism made space for a moral center beyond both irrational superstition and superficial secularism. The loving God of Universalism by and large won out, pushing fire and brimstone visions of hell to the margins as mainline Christians and even many evangelicals embraced our bedrock heresy. What ideas and leaders are we incubating today? As the world turns through the most widespread transformation of society and consciousness since the reformation, how do we use our attention to nurture and grow both our personal and our common dreams? As a politics fueled by fear and anger, with worship of an authoritarian strongman at its center, takes hold of our government this month, what is it we will worship instead? What future will we set our souls' hearths to incubate?

Happy New Year,
Rev. Marcus Liefert



January Services

Sundays 11 am

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

January 5

Growth Conditions

January 12

The Tools That Shape Us

January 19

The Thermodynamics of Justice

January 26

Topic TBD

Coffee & Community

Before and after the service

In person in the Social Hall

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Sundays at 9:30 am In Person and on Zoom

January 12 – Toward a New Vision of a UU Theocracy, presented by Rev. Marcus Liefert

January 26 – Restorative Justice-Why It Matters, presented by David Belden (UUCB member) and Kevin Skipper.

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!

Religious Education

Sundays at 11:15 am (during service)

We will explore the theme for the month of January: PLURALISM, which means more than one way. We celebrate that we have many sources that inspire us; and that we make room for different cultures, experiences, and beliefs. Please email Kathryn Jay, Director of Family Ministry for more information: kathryn@uucb.org.

Humanist Connections

Sundays at 1 pm on Zoom (3rd Sunday is in person, no zoom)

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/95057373857>

January 5 – Ray Westergard will arrange for the selection of topics and speakers for February.

January 12 – Dennis Monthei will discuss “Reparations”.

January 19 – Paul Ulbrich will discuss “If you were a senator, what legislation would you propose?” Safir room, no Zoom.

January 26 – Don Anderson will discuss “Longevity” followed by a group discussion.

Special Events

January 18

9 am Work Party
4:30 pm Parents' Night Out
5 pm Youth Gathering

January 26 at 1 pm

UUCB Board of Trustees Candidates Forum

January 26 at 4 pm

PRIDE Project Movie Night

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 & 3rd Sunday)

1 pm WOVS Working to Overcome White Supremacy (4th Sunday)

Monday

11 am Textile & Art (2nd Monday)

5 pm Climate Justice Committee (4th Monday)

6 pm Men's Fellowship (1st Monday)

Tuesday

10:15 to 11 am make sandwiches at GRIP (4th Tuesday)

11:15 to 12:45 serve lunch at GRIP (4th Tuesday)

7 pm World Peace Committee (3rd 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

9 am Work Party (3rd Saturday)

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

2 pm Death Café (quarterly)

4 pm Parents' Night Out (3rd Saturday)

6:30 pm Youth Social Event

Announcements

Board Listening Presence

Michael Armstrong: (510) 219-3847

michaelarmstrong2494@comcast.net

Leadership News

With the December departure of our Executive Director, we enter into a somewhat liminal – or in-between space – in how UUCB manages its administration, finances, facilities and all the details that go into church operations.

As we enter this new time, UUCB is first and foremost blessed with talented employees upon whose dedication, skills, and insights about our future staffing structure we will heavily rely. Please thank them generously!

To advise during this transitional period, the Board of Trustees established a Staffing Task Force to work with Rev. Marcus on:

- 1 For the near term, provide support and guidance on fulfilling at least the essential duties & responsibilities of the Executive Director position; and
- 2 With input from staff, leadership and other members of the congregation, develop a recommended staffing structure for church administration/operations.

A key development is that a highly experienced Executive Director, transition consultant, and long-time Unitarian Universalist is available part-time starting February 10 to help manage UUCB operations and advise us on future administrative structure. As our interim Executive Director, Sharon Dolan will work with us on options for our next chapter of church management. (Please check out Sharon's website – scdolanconsulting.com – to learn about her extensive executive experience in non-profit management, including Freight & Salvage, Bay Area Children's Theater and more.)

In the meantime, a combination of additional staff hours, assigned volunteer support, and your equanimity, patience and willingness to step up to help will keep UUCB's many projects, programs and pursuits underway. For the immediate future, administrative contact information is:

- Connections & Communications: Charis Domador – Connections@uucb.org
- Finance & Administration: Janae Heard – Janae@uucb.org
- Facilities: Peter Barnholdt – Peter@uucb.org

Unsure who to contact? Send email to ED@uucb.org for a response/routing

Again, much gratitude to our staff!

The Staffing Task Force (StaffingTF@uucb.org) is available for questions, concerns or ideas about present or future staffing considerations. We are confident about UUCB continuing to be strong, vibrant and well-managed!

From the Board of Trustees

“What’s new?” Such an ordinary question – and such a vast array of answers. It’s 2025: New year, new beginnings, new resolutions (maybe), new president, new insights, and often new hurdles.

At December’s Board meeting, we discussed everything from new insurance rates to administrative changes at church.

Change can be enormously challenging, yet also a chance for renewal. We’re incredibly fortunate at UUCB to receive support in both areas. Our pastoral care team lifts up so many of our members in time of need, our chalice circles foster deep connections, and our community ties nurture vital mutual support.

At the same time, we’re offered the opportunity to grow in multiple spheres. Just consider the new statements of our UU principles: LOVE surrounded by Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, and Generosity. It’s challenging to select even one of these qualities and ask ourselves to expand our capacity in that area.

Think of how many ways UUCB addresses all of this. Apart from our deeply supportive pastoral care and chalice circles, our church offers such programs as the Walk and Talk group, Aging with Grace, the Men’s Fellowship group, the Textile and Arts gathering (where relaxed chatting is the main activity) – not to mention choir, children’s choir, and the exciting RE programs that Kathryn Jay is developing. Alongside that, should we be looking for challenges, we have the Humanist group to broaden our minds as well as the many Social Justice Council programs to expand our horizons:

WOWS, Climate Justice, POCC, HIP, LFDMC, the Pride Project, Voting Justice and Equity in Berkeley Schools. Each of these programs welcomes visitors and new members.

AND we continue to give thanks for our Rev. Marcus, who provides both challenge and support for the many changes we all experience – and will continue to experience – in 2025.

Board of Trustees December 2024 Actions

- 1 **February Congregational Meeting:** Scheduled for Sunday, February 23, after worship service.
- 2 **Freestone Property:** Approved Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) recommendation to:
 - List the entire Freestone properties (Lots 1 & 2 + Dome lot) for sale if the one well is unsuccessful, or on April 1, 2025, whichever comes first.
 - If water is found, Lots 1 & 2 are sold and \$250,000 is raised by April 1, 2025, then the listing of the entire Freestone properties would not proceed on April 1, 2025;
 - All the subsequent milestones in the resolution would remain as written and approved. (See Freestone Oversight Committee Beacon article on pg. 5 for more info)
- 3 **UUCB membership reconciliation and certification:** Changed 72 “active members” to “former members,” based on the outreach to and feedback from those individuals. This results in a count of 258 active UUCB members.
- 4 **Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) structures:** Accepted report from Buildings & Grounds Committee that two KFPD structures on the lower parking lot will be removed rather than retained by UUCB.
- 5 **Interim Executive Director:** Supported Rev. Marcus’ proposal to hire Sharon Dolan as a half-time interim executive director to help with the transition process; February start date. (See Leadership News article on pg. 3 for more info)

Freestone Oversight Committee

The Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) is comprised of Beth Pollard (Board Rep and Co-chair), Tom Tripp (Co-chair), David Wemmer (Freestone Committee Rep), Bob Moore (Free-stone Committee Rep), Susan Lankford, and Larry Nagel. The FOC gave a presentation to the UUCB Board of Trustees at their board meeting on December 4, 2024, and made a recommendation on how to proceed as follows:

- As reported by the FOC at the November 2024 Board meeting, the Freestone Committee has secured donated funds drill one well where, per geologist subterranean surveying, there exists the likelihood of providing sufficient water to support development on Lots 1 and 2 and therefore the sale of those lots to raise the needed \$250,000.
- Timing factors, including wet weather, have resulted in a delay in drilling. The driller re-ports they need about 7 - 10 days of dry weather before their equipment can access the proposed well site (due to soft soil conditions) and drill. It is unknown when such a period will occur.
- On November 20, the FOC met with UUCB's Realtor for the two lots for her advice on potential interest, sale value, timing, and related issues. The FOC then deliberated and reached consensus from all members on the following.
- The FOC recommended, and the Board of Trustees made a motion, that
 - 1 The Board list the entire Freestone properties (Lots 1 and 2 and Dome Lot 4) for sale if the one well is unsuccessful or on April 1, 2025, whichever comes first.
 - 2 If water is found, Lots 1 and 2 are sold and \$250,000 is raised by April 1, 2025, then the listing of the entire Freestone properties would not proceed on April 1, 2025.
 - 3 All the subsequent milestones in the resolution would remain as written and approved.
 - 4 This Board motion passed with one dissenting vote.

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

Partner Church

Thanks to everyone who signed the Supercard for our friends in Homorodújfalu. Just as Anne was ready to mail the card to Transylvania, we received holiday greetings from Rev. Atilla. Here's part of his message, edited for clarity:

"We succeeded to accomplish the PC buying task for the school and the kindergarten too. The teachers and the children are very grateful. I will send some photos about the handover ceremony. Last week we announced the Scholarship Program for our students. They have time until the 15th of December to apply for the scholarship. After that the committee will review the applicants and we hope that before Christmas we will be able to give the scholarship to every student. I wish you all the best and have great preparing for the most wonderful time of the year!"

On December 1, 2024, Anne and I attended the service at Oakland First Unitarian for the kick-off of our regional UU partnership initiative. Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, San Mateo, San Jose and Mt. Diablo Partner Church Committee attended in person or on-line. This should represent a positive movement forward, however, some of those congregations have some considerable work to repair their partnerships in the meantime.

This new movement, especially in expanding partnerships to the Philippine and India, suggests a name change for UUCB's Transylvanian Partner Church Committee. We would really like to hear what you think about that. Just tell your thoughts and ideas to Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net

Social Justice

In January, the Social Justice Council meeting will be an IN-PERSON potluck on Sunday, January 12 at 5 pm in the Fireside Room. We will be celebrating the New Year, taking stock of our accomplishments in 2024, and looking toward the important justice work we will be called upon to do as the new presidential administration begins. All are welcome to join us!

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

Let's join in celebrating MLK Jr. Day Monday, January 20, 9 am - 1 pm. on the Richmond Greenway

We'll work with Urban Tilth as well as (SOS) Safe Organized Spaces --- both previous UUCB Good Neighbors -- along with The Watershed Project, and other community organizations for Richmond's 18th annual MLK Day at Unity Park Community Plaza. The celebration will be a memorable day of service including a gathering at Unity Park at 16th Street on the Greenway.

At Unity Park, we'll help The Watershed Project and other community organizations beautify the greenway by planting plants, weeding, and mulching. Then we're invited to stay for educational activities, local vendors, live performances, plus a free lunch of veggie soup and cornbread --- while supplies last. Food vendors will also be on site.

AGENDA:

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM – 63 S. 8t Street, Richmond
Volunteer Arrival, Check-In, Donation drop-off

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Crafts and Gardening

11:15 AM - 1:00 PM
MLK Memorial and Celebration at Unity Park

Cynthia Greenleaf, socialjustice@uucb.org

PRIDE PROJECT

The LGBTQIA+ PRIDE Project is hosting a Movie Night in the Fireside Room at 5 pm on Sunday, January 26. Please bring snacks to share. The film is TBA and will be family friendly.

Questions: Marsha Lanier, socialjustice@uucb.org

GOOD NEIGHBOR

As of December 15, all votes were counted in support of twelve community groups --- one per month in 2025 --- who were selected to receive Good Neighbor status. Many thanks go to Natalie Campbell, Norie Clarke, Lonnie Moseley, Susan Blair and Sheldon Jones for their work in reaching out to the nominated groups, inviting them to speak at the December 11 SJC meeting, as well as organizing the ballot and vote which included many more congregational members this year than in the past.

Winners were: Albany Thrives Together, Berkeley Food Pantry, Berkeley Public Schools Fund, Contra Costa Justice Center, Emeryville Citizens Assistance Program, Gill Tract Community Farm, Groundwork Richmond, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, NIAD Art Center, No More Tears, Through the Looking Glass and Tiny Village Spirit.

BLESSINGS BAGS



Gemma Trepczynski is one of our UUCB youth who assembled Blessings Bags in early November, which inspired her mother Savala to suggest hosting a Blessings Bags Bash with friends from Richmond's Mira Vista Elementary School. They organized it

like a potluck, creating an excel sheet for people to sign up and bring various items: water, deodorant, feminine products, toothbrushes/paste/floss, snacks, wipes, soap and socks.

When folks arrived, they put all the items in the center of the room. Gemma coached everyone on how to assemble the bags. Because of the rainy season, they chose Ziplocs, assembling 27 bags with each assembler taking 2-3 bags with them to distribute. Everyone loved the idea. Assemblers were mostly 3rd-4th graders, and a couple of kindergarteners. Some were aware that people are unhoused, while others were surprised to learn about this.

"I would do it again!" Gemma said. Savala said it was like the "stone soup" story.

Beth Jerde, socialjustice@uucb.org

CLIMATE JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Our Climate Justice Revival Follow-Up subcommittee is meeting to consider the information and thoughtful perspectives we received from everyone who attended our September UUA-model Revival workshop.

We're aiming to integrate the UUA's revised Green Sanctuary process into our work. UUCB is already an active congregation, and we aim to be recognized by doing significant work on at least two of the UUA's Green Sanctuary Four Essentials of Climate Action. Our subcommittee is working on an action plan that can involve our whole congregation.

The UUA's Four Essentials of Climate Action are: Mitigation (reducing emissions from energy use, transportation, waste, and consumption); Congregational transformation (shifting from isolation to collaboration); Community resilience (cultivating communities of care to prepare for and respond to climate impacts and reconnecting with nature); and Social justice (addressing the inequities in how climate change disrupts some communities more than others).

Look for more ideas in the future about how we might move forward on these UUA climate action "essentials." Check the UUCB website for more information on our past activities, and please consider joining us in this critical work. We're a great group! Contact Chair Sheila Tarbet for information about our meeting schedule.

Sheila Tarbet, socialjustice@uucb.org

EQUITY IN BERKELEY SCHOOLS

Progress! Sue Collins reports really enjoying working with the King Middle School art teacher, who she says is excellent. And Helen Toy has now spent five Tuesday afternoons helping third and fourth graders at Cragmont Elementary who are having a few difficulties with math.

Meanwhile, Jan Collins, new to UUCB, and Helen Toy had a great time on the morning of December 14 handing out spectacular new toys and gently used clothing to families in need, working under the auspices of the Berkeley Public Schools Fund.

In January, the SJC's Equity in Public Schools project will have a table in the Social Hall with new lists of teachers who need classroom support. And in February, the Public Schools Fund will be asking for one-time help in food pantries around the district. Keep in touch! Helen Toy, socialjustice@uucb.org

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Covenant of Right Relations

We covenant to build a religious community guided by love and sustained by respectful relationships. Believing that building healthy relationships is a spiritual practice, we aim to listen appreciatively, speak with care, express gratitude, honor our differences, and assume good intentions. We endeavor to communicate directly, honestly, and compassionately, particularly when we are in conflict. When we hurt one another, we will try to forgive, make amends and reconnect in a spirit of love. In celebration of the common purpose that unites us, we will do our best to abide by this covenant.

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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