
May 2025

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley
Vol. 84 #5

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

From the Minister

We're in the midst now of the worship series we're calling Venus, Mars and Other Planets. Each of us ends up with a unique sex and gender constellation, its stars composed of how we are assigned at birth, our anatomy and physiology, familial and cultural norms and expectations, our sexuality and desire, and how all these points dance around one another as the inner landscape does or doesn't conform to the outer world. Over the past few decades, and especially the last several years, norms about how we think and talk about gender have changed at a rapid pace. To some it has felt like we are traveling at warp speed, encountering worlds of gender with alien language and ways of thinking, sometimes setting off earth-shattering quakes on worlds we thought we knew. While some of us are still struggling to keep up, others have unleashed a reactionary backlash that has intensified the stakes of the conversation.

Gender can be limiting or liberating, can be a deep wellspring of identity and an ability to discern truth, and can turn us into targets of political or physical violence. We are in desperate need of more public conversation about gender, more language for articulating our stories and our wisdom about the role gender plays in both our practical and spiritual lives, and more clarity about how we listen to, learn from, and lift up those who are marginalized and targeted based on their experience or expression of gender. Especially in this political moment, we need to equip ourselves to be a community that celebrates the worth and dignity of transgender and other gender-nonconforming people.

How do we practice being respectful, considerate, and appreciative guests when we explore worlds that are unfamiliar to us? How do we approach territory so familiar that we assume we know all there is to know about it with fresh eyes? And what secret worlds may wait within, offering hidden wellsprings for meeting this moment with vitality and courage?

With you to infinity and beyond,
Rev. Marcus Liefert



May Services

Sundays 11 am

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

May 4

Doctors of Durability

May 11

Mother's Day Service

May 18

Terraforming the Toxins

May 25

Memorial Day

Coffee & Community

Starts at 10:30 am in the Atrium

Lunch

In person in the Social Hall

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Sundays at 9:30 am In Person and on Zoom

May 4 – Open Forum: Looking Toward the Future. Join Rev. Marcus, Lonnie Moseley, and Anne Wardell for an open discussion about next steps for Personal Theology.

May 18 – What Moves YoUU? The final session for this spring is an invitation for you to share a short personal story, vignette, or moment that affected you deeply in your own spiritual journey/search for meaning.

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 our theme for the month: LOVE, which is what powers our Unitarian Universalist values. Please email Rev. Kathryn Jay, Director of Family Ministry for more information: kathryn@uucb.org.

Humanist Connections

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

May 4 – Topic Selection for next month and Short Topic Discussion. Ray Westergard.

May 11 – Dennis Monthei will discuss "What's causing the problems with the manosphere?"

May 18 – Paul Ulbrich will discuss "How do Dunn and Kruger explain everything?"

May 25 – Marcia Bates will discuss "What are scientific methods?"

Special Events

May 3 @ 9:30 am
KFPD Shredding Event. For more details [click here](#).

May 4 @ 11 am
Doctors of Durability: celebrating our members who are 80 and better. Followed by lunch.

May 13 @ 7 pm
Budget Q&A on [Zoom](#)

May 17 @ 10 am
Multicultural Arts Festival

Good Neighbor May

Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity: im4humanintegrity.org

Working at the intersection of spirituality and social movements, we mobilize congregations to take a stand on issues of social justice like immigration and mass incarceration, and we engage people of faith to develop their own leadership so they can stand up against racism, discrimination and the political challenges of the day.

Weekly Events uucb.org/weekahead

Mondays

9 am Write For Your Life

9 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 (1=1st Sunday, 2=2nd Sunday, etc.)

9:30 am Parents Discussion Group (1/3)

1 pm Working to Overcome White Supremacy (2)

1 pm Immigrant Support Group (1)

Monday

11 am Textile & Art (2)

5 pm Climate Justice Committee (4)

Tuesday

10:15 Prep/Serve Lunch GRIP (4)

7 pm World Peace Committee (3)

Wednesday

7:15 pm Board of Trustees (1)

7 pm Social Justice Council (2)

7 pm Program Council (3)

Thursday

10 am Thank You Circle (3)

Friday

11 am Textile & Art (4)

Saturday

9 am Work Party (3)

1 pm POCC People of Color Caucus (3)

2 pm Death Café (quarterly)

4 pm Parents' Night Out (3)

6:30 pm Youth Social Event (3)

Announcements

Board Listening Presence

Helen Toy helen_toy@yahoo.com

Personal Theology

For 10 years, I have had the honor and privilege of serving on the Personal Theology program at UUCB. This remarkable program has been sponsored by UUCB for 45 years!! Past speakers have covered a variety of subjects such as the world's religions, life after death, grace, reincarnation, Baha'i, Sikh, earth-centered beliefs, creation spirituality, growing up UU, the dream world, process theology, and so much more. It is time for me to step aside as chair of this important program and let others shape its future. Thanks for all your support, suggestions, presentations, and attendance!

In gratitude,

Anne Wardell

From the Kitchen

To meet rising food costs, **the last Sunday lunch of each month will now be a potluck.** Please mark your calendar to remind you to bring food to share. If most of you bring about six servings per adult, there should be enough food for everyone, even those who come empty-handed for whatever reason. Volunteers will be in the kitchen to receive your contributions when you arrive at church and we will refrigerate, reheat, or just put them out at lunchtime. Speaking of volunteers, we still need more help with cleanup after lunch on Sundays. There is a spreadsheet you can sign up on [here](#), or you can [email me](#). And here's an idea: If you are an individual or group who like to cook, you could choose a Sunday and put on the meal—just email me to let me know when you would like to do that. We can reimburse your expenses up to \$200. Or you can just do part of the meal, e.g. grilling some burgers and hot dogs on May 25, Memorial Day weekend!

Ann Harlow

Stewardship Campaign Update

The pledge drive is nearing the finish line—hooray!

THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE PLEDGED!!

But there is still more work to do, always more work to do in the world and in our community, supporting our church. If you were at the service on April 6, you probably heard Greg and me announce the winding down of the drive, a day that UUCB calls *Celebration Sunday*. Hopefully you got to eat some of the special, delicious lunch prepared by the kitchen crew—thank you, kitchen crew! And maybe you also enjoyed a slice of cake or gluten free/vegan dessert. Greg and I spoke during our short time on the chancel to the importance of paying it forward. We recognize that since this congregation's founding in 1891, **thousands of individuals and families** have made a pledge and a contribution to UUCB so that we today could enjoy meeting at 1 Lawson Road or virtually online. They knew then what we also know now: the future of UUCB depends on the support of its members and friends, in order that it might continue for future generations.

Not sure what the pledge drive is? In the spring, sometime around the month of March, we all make a pledge (a promise of what we can financially contribute toward next year's expenses. We call this the Pledge Drive, and it's led by the Stewardship Team). Those combined pledges get totaled up and given to the board, who then sets a budget for the next year, which comes before the congregation for a vote at the congregational meeting (May). That budget goes into effect on July 1st.

Some folks can make their contribution right away, others of us plan to give monthly or at the end of the calendar year or when we get our tax returns. There are LOTS of options when it comes to making a financial contribution. NOW is the time to make your PLEDGE (the promise of what you feel you can share of your treasure).

If you have not yet pledged, it's not too late to do so! If you're reading this online you can follow this [LINK](#) to the online pledge sheet. As of this writing, in mid-April, we have heard from 85% of our pledging units and are nearly 92% of the way toward our goal, coming in at \$484,896.78. As of this writing, the Stewardship team is still reaching out to those we have not heard from, aiming for 100% participation. We look forward to updating you again with those numbers through The Week Ahead and our website.

It's worth noting that while our commitment as members is to make a contribution of record to support UUCB financially, there is no minimum required; we appreciate every pledge. In case you've never had the chance to be part of a pledge drive here at UUCB, it's also worth noting that anyone experiencing financial hardship can ask for a waiver of the pledge commitment, no questions asked. A pledge is not a contract—if your finances change, so too can your commitment of support.

From all of us on the Stewardship team, to all of you who make UUCB the vibrant community that it is: THANK YOU FOR YOUR VARIOUS AND VARIED CONTRIBUTIONS!

Ariel Smith-Iyer and Greg Lemieux, Selene Fabiano, Mary Gardner, Paul Hudson, and Anne Wardell.

Affirmation For a Spiritual Home

A poem by Claire Baker

How blest we are in this free-thinking
congregation—
donating truckloads of food & funds to the
hungry,
coats in winter. We volunteer in local soup
kitchens;
tell our life stories both dark & glorious.
Whatever
our past, now we are here, among movers &
makers.
Hallelujah, humanists, devout atheists, cured
Catholics.
Yay for however/whatever we seek, free to open
wide,
step back when we must, true to our quest.
How grand when needs are met—like over
Sunday's
meal, in reaching out to listen & share, we
kindle
flames in the hearth of our hearts . . . Here in
ritual,
we bless animals; buried guns below a Gun
Plow,
a monumental statement . . .
Our spiritual home is all-inclusive: we bond
with whomever we love; celebrate children &
dance,
sermons & choirs, recitals, humor, lectures, art to
share.
On unnerving issues, we cultivate grit:
protesting
injustice, we hold as one body, one voice
in sweeter air.

May spirit-adventures begin with tabula rasas—
slates erased, cleared! May all who feel like
pebbles
chipped from the Rock, grow in time into
mountaintops
as borne ahead on love, a kindly karma. Bless
each climber
on sturdy mystical ladders, as our citadel on a
hill nurtures
epiphanies . . . Honoring our spiritual home, we
serve in ways
that sustain a Higher Power.
MAY IT BE SO.

© Claire J. Baker

Celebration Sunday, 4-6-25

Partner Church

Anne Greenwood has an invitation for you!
Come explore with me and other curious folks
our wider Unitarian and Universalist
connections around the world. I had the
privilege of attending the Spring Seminar of
the International Convocation of
Unitarian*Universalist Women [ICUW] in
New York City during the United Nations 69th
Commission on the Status of Women. 23
women spent two days together learning
about the workings of and with the UN. The
ICUW is a small but mighty group working
to make a difference for women and girls in
several places . . . India, Kenya, Bolivia, Ukraine
to name a few.

I was impressed by the opportunity that the
UN offers for people from all over the world to
come together, collaborate and advocate for
gender equity and provide assistance to those
in need, despite the hurdles and setbacks.”
And here is a link to the ICUW newsletter

with more information about the Spring Seminar: <https://icuuw.org/what-we-do/news-blog>

Join me on the biweekly Zoom gatherings of IWUUC and meet some of the wonderful Unitarians from abroad. Email me annegt1@sbcglobal.net or admin@iwuuc.org to get the Zoom link! Visit our table on Sundays for the latest news about the Sustainable Goals report from the UN.

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 (Freestone Committee Rep), Susan Lankford, and Larry Nagel.

The Freestone Committee prepared a petition for a special congregational meeting and collected the necessary signatures prior to April 1. According to our bylaws, the Board of Trustees must call the special congregational meeting within 30 days of the receipt of the petition. At the April 2, 2025 Board meeting, the Board of Trustees decided to call the special meeting for April 27, 2025.

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

Freestone Vote Result

The final vote was: 77 Yes, 74 No. The motion as passed reads:

A. Extend the date for completion of the first milestone, raising at least \$250,000, to September 30, 2025.

B. All subsequent milestone dates shall be extended in accordance with their original durations following the first milestone.

From the Board of Trustees

Refreshing Our Bylaws, Reaffirming Our Values

Although most congregants and members do not have a need to read or reference our church's bylaws, this is our foundational governing document which underpins our structure, how we govern ourselves, how we operate and therefore it directly, and indirectly, reflects our values. It is first and foremost a legal document, and so the language might be a little more cold and more logical than what most of us are used to reading, but nevertheless it is a living document that contains our good intentions toward each other, and our hopes for the future.

Our bylaws reflect our values in that we make it easy to welcome new members, we have thought deeply about working toward equal access and equal treatment, we value transparency and ethics in governance and finance, and we challenge ourselves to review and update our bylaws on a regular basis, in order to respond to a continually changing world.

In service of continual change, every three years we form a bylaws task force to review the bylaws and recommend amendments. I was lucky enough to work alongside some wonderful and thoughtful members and be a part of the task force for 2024-2025.

Some of my framework for reviewing the bylaws and amendments is stated below. I found that by asking myself questions, it helped me to review the bylaws through the different lenses of these problem statements:

Adaptability: Where are the bylaws already outdated? Where are the bylaws causing friction with what we want to do? Are there any other changes we can anticipate in the next year or two?

Flexibility: Are we prescribing a specific solution that accidentally ties our hands? Can we grant more flexibility, but ensure that solutions align with our values? Should any items be in the governance manuals instead of the bylaws to facilitate faster review and updates?

Accessibility: Are we able to help more members access their rights and privileges? Can we make sure more voices are able to be heard or that we are not inadvertently silencing or sidelining voices?

Transparency: Are we calling for transparency everywhere that is appropriate? Is there any common bylaws confusion or questions where restatement can help clarify? Is there anything unstated, that should be stated?

Balance: Are we inadvertently weakening the power of the congregation to check the board and Minister? Is fear of conflict and disagreement overly dictating our procedures? Are we changing too much or changing too fast to properly assess our needs? Are we prioritizing what is really important or impactful?

It has been a pleasure working with my fellow congregants in the 2024-2025 bylaws task force. I am continually impressed by the amount of care and attention our members give to our church and community, and I hope when you read the recommendations of the bylaws task force that you will feel the same about our work.

Please read through the proposed updates when you receive them, and please vote.

Many thanks to the rest of the 2024-2025 bylaws task force: Andrea Brown, Cynthia Asprodites, Lorraine Schnurr, and Michael Armstrong.

David Rosales, member UUCB Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees Actions

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

Board Actions from April 2025

1. **New Members:** Board members made welcoming phone calls to individuals who signed the UUCB membership book between September 2025 to February 2026.
2. **Aesthetics Committee:** The Board invited representatives from the Aesthetics Committee to attend the April board meeting to share more details about their ideas for a process for exploring possible changes to the atrium while inviting congregational input.
3. **Freestone:** The Board scheduled a special congregational meeting for 4/27/25 in response to the Freestone Committee's submission of a valid petition requesting a congregational vote on an extension of the milestone dates outlined in the March 2023 Resolution.
4. **Bylaws:** The UUCB Bylaws Review Committee has reviewed the current bylaws and is proposing a few changes, including some designed to provide UUCB with more flexibility with electronic voting. The committee held a second informational meeting on 4/6/25 and will bring the proposed changes to the congregation for a vote at the May 18th congregational meeting.

Social Justice

The May meeting of the Social Justice Council will take place on May 14 at 7:00 via Zoom. We will be voting on new Sponsored Projects applications. And should you feel drawn to more Social Justice actions, we have a Civic Action table in the Social Hall with ways you can participate in expressing our UU values through advocacy and action.

Cyndy Greenleaf – socialjustice@uucb.org

Immigrant Support Committee

The Immigrant Support group has created a Sanctuary Pledge to renew the promise our congregation first made in 2018, to support people who have come to our country from elsewhere. The new pledge spells out our commitment a little more clearly. It has four main points: advocacy in the political realm for justice for immigrants, accompaniment for immigrant families, participation in networks of protection and “rapid response,” and partnership with organizations and faith groups beyond UUCB.

So far, our advocacy has included promoting and showing up for demonstrations calling for the end to the current cruel and abusive immigration policies the federal administration is perpetrating. We have provided lists of events you can attend to protest the way immigrants are being treated as well as threats to immigrants. We have also written to our representatives in DC and Sacramento, and we have provided a list of issues and people you can write regarding immigration issues. The lists we have are available at the social action table you pass while in line for lunch, or by contacting Francey Liefert. Contact info below.

Several congregants have already been accompanying a family on behalf of UUCB. The accompaniment has included helping with housing, legal issues, school for the children and

translating. If the congregation adopts the new pledge, we may want to expand UUCB accompaniment to another individual or family.

Participation in networks of protection has just begun with the distribution of red “know your rights” cards. You can pick some up each Sunday at the Social Justice table. Several of us have attended training sessions at La Peña to learn how to respond to ICE provocations, and we plan to present the information we learned to the congregation soon. When training is available for rapid response teams, we will let you know so we can all participate in witnessing ICE raids. In some cases, around the country, ICE has left areas where there are groups of observers taking videos.

Partnering with several organizations, including the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity (IM4HI) and the Friends of La Peña Immigrant Group, has already begun. We are also working with East Bay UU churches to coordinate our efforts and to share information about actions and events where we can support each other.

IM4HI has discovered a critical need for temporary guest housing, as well as accompaniment, for immigrants who have recently arrived in the East Bay. The Campus Lutheran Chapel, Kehilla Synagogue and the Berkeley Friends Meeting have already created space in their buildings for immigrants who were unhoused. This is different from “sanctuary” because the current administration has declared that churches are no longer safe from ICE. IM4HI is encouraging other faith groups to provide housing, either in our buildings or in congregant homes. We are considering expanding our pledge to include a commitment to housing next year.

We will vote to adopt the pledge described above at the May 18th congregational meeting. Francey Liefert – socialjustice@uucb.org

Climate Justice Committee

Join the Climate Justice Committee (CJC) as we map out our activities for the coming year. We will be planning how we can meet the UUA requirements for Green Sanctuary (GS) recognition, taking into account input we've received from our CJC membership and from the 35-40 people who attended the Climate Justice Revival we led last September.

The UUA Green Sanctuary process asks us to work in the "GS Essential Areas" of Congregational Transformation, Social Justice, Mitigation (reducing emissions and pollutants), and Adaptation and Resilience (adapting to climate change and developing resilient communities). We are particularly looking for folks who are interested in helping develop UUCB's capacities in Adaptation and Resilience. The CJC meets the fourth Monday of every month from 5-6:30 pm on Zoom. Please contact Sheila if you'd like to join us or sign up at the SJC table.

Sheila Tarbet, Climate Justice Committee Chair
– socialjustice@uucb.org

Pride Project

A huge Thank YOU to Cynthia Asprodites for planning and leading Coming Out Stories. The gathering was held on March 23rd in the Fireside Room. We had a wonderful group of ten women, and everyone felt comfortable enough to share. Cynthia led us in a Chalice Circle format with relevant quotes. It was a very special event, one I hope we'll repeat. Sponsored by the LGBTQIA+ PRIDE PROJECT of UUCB.

Marsha Lanier, socialjustice@uucb.org

WOWS

In the April WOWS (Working to Overcome White Supremacy) meeting, Julie Ann Winkelstein gave a wonderful presentation on homelessness, including definitions of homelessness, information about who experiences homelessness, and ways currently stably housed people can take action. WOWS will meet next on Sunday, May 11th, from 1:30-3 pm, on Zoom.

Julia Rogers - 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: 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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