
October 2025

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley
Vol. 84 #10

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

From the Board of Trustees (Michael DeWitt)

Following a quiet summer, UUCB is bustling once more as we begin a new church year. This is a time for planning, setting goals, and planting new seeds. I wish to use a planting metaphor from (or related to) the recent UUCB Three Sisters Garden Blessing.

Passage below is from “A Three Sisters Garden Tale”

The corn is the firstborn and grows straight and stiff.... Making a strong stem is its highest priority.... It needs to be there for its younger sister, the bean.... The bean focuses on leaf growth, putting out a pair of heart-shaped leaves on the bottom of the stem, then another pair and another...

As we look toward the harvest season in the garden, our church is in a replanting season.

Our leaders are back and re-engaging our congregation. Rev. Marcus Liefert is inspiring us from the pulpit with thought-provoking sermons, Dr. Bryan Baker is leading our choir Luminescence in song, and Rev. Dr. Kathryn Jay is reconnecting with our children, youth, and parents.

Last month, we began a consultation for a Capital Campaign to address the needs of our campus. After reviewing the Buildings & Grounds reports, we found that our buildings, while in excellent condition, are 65 years old and require significant upgrades. We've had many recent successes, including the reconstruction of the Safir Room and upgrades to the Sanctuary's furnace and ventilation systems.

Looking ahead, we are discussing several projects for the upcoming year, such as improving the Social Hall's lighting, installing ADA-compliant doors, restoring the playfield, and planning for an all-electric campus.

Continued on page 5



October Services

Sundays 11 am

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

October 5

Declaring Victory (Rev. Marcus' last service before parental leave)

October 12

Rev. Amy Zucker-Morgenstern

October 19

Rev. Sheri Prud'homme

October 26

Being in Bodies, Rev. Kathryn Jay

Coffee & Community

Starts at 10:30 am in the Atrium

Lunch

In the Social Hall following the service

Sunday Programming

Personal Theology

Some Sundays, 9:30 am, Fireside Room and on Zoom

October 19 – Diane Rusnak, Dream Artist, "Stepping through the dream door into deeper life connection and awareness"

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). The theme for September and October will be BUILDING THE COMMON GOOD. Email Rev. Kathryn Jay, Minister for Congregational Life: kathryn@uucb.org

Humanist Connections

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

October 5 – Topic Selection for next month and Short Topic Discussion. Harold Ogren.

October 12 – Dennis Monthei will discuss "Impact of Technology on our Children"

October 19 (In Person) – Paul Ulbrich will discuss "What is Hypnosis, Anyway?"

October 26 – Harold Ogren will discuss "Our Alien Visitor: Comet E1/ATLAS"

Special Events

Oct. 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 Berkeley High Presents Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*

Oct. 7, 14 A House for Hope: Deepening Your Journey with Unitarian Universalism

Oct. 13 Unity in Song: Circle Singing with Renée Benmeleh (Mondays for 6 weeks)

Oct. 18 Parents' Night Out

Oct. 18 Youth Group Gathering

Oct. 19 Newcomer Q&A

Oct. 23 Litquake presents *Mona's Eyes*

Oct. 26 Pathway to Connection Session 3: UU and Personal Theology

Good Neighbor

Tiny Village Spirit

tinyvillagespirit.org

The mission of Tiny Village Spirit is to work to end the crisis of homelessness through engaging communities in constituent led development of decent, dignified emergency housing villages and in community organizing for systemic change toward creating housing justice.

Weekly Events (see 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

Berkeley High Presents Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*



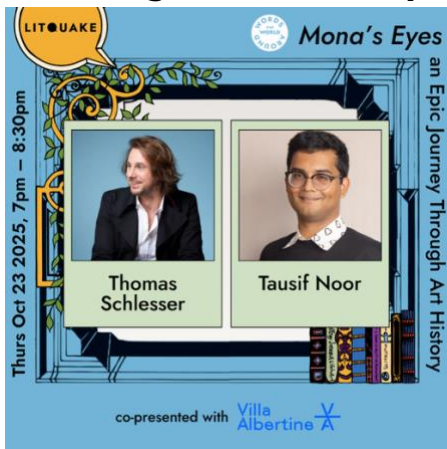
Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses* is an adaptation of Ovid's ancient epic poem. It features a series of vignettes that combine ancient Greek and Roman mythology with contemporary language and ideas. Buy tickets: <https://shorturl.at/gpPEw>

Unity in Song: Singing Circle



In this six-week *Unity in Song* journey, playful facilitator **Renée Benmeleh** invites us to co-create songs in the moment—layering rhythms, melodies, and harmonies until we're singing like a living, breathing choir. Starts Oct. 13. Mondays at 7 pm.

Litquake presents *Mona's Eyes*: Thomas Schlessner's Epic Journey Through Art History



It's no exaggeration to call *Mona's Eyes* an international sensation. The novel by **Thomas Schlessner** is not only a #1 bestseller in his native France, it's also captivated audiences worldwide, having been translated into 37 languages, including Braille. *Mona's Eyes* promises to do for art history what *Sophie's World* did for philosophy, as it takes readers on an epic journey through five centuries of art. Having learned that ten-year-old Mona will soon lose her sight, her beloved grandfather commits to filling her mind's eye with beauty, introducing her to a masterwork of visual art each week for the next year. Suffused with rich musings on the bonds of family, the endurance and healing powers of art, and the ways artists illuminate the world, *Mona's Eyes* is a novel readers will be discussing for decades to come. In his only Bay Area appearance on his North American tour, Schlessner will be in conversation with **Tausif Noor**, curatorial associate at Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA). Doors open at 6:30pm. **FREE, \$10-\$15 suggested donation.**

Register: <https://uucb.org/events/111494/>

The Baby Liefert Lullaby Fund



Our community is delighted to celebrate Rev. Marcus and his wife Caitlyn as they prepare to welcome baby Liefert. As a gift of love, we're giving them a beautiful [Pottery Barn Lullaby Glider Rocker](#)—just right for Caitlyn to rest in and to rock the baby with comfort and ease. It will be delivered and assembled at their home, a small way to make life a little gentler in those first precious months.

On Sunday, October 5—Rev. Marcus's last Sunday before paternity leave—we'll share cake in the Social Hall and "present" the chair with our blessings and good wishes. Any funds raised beyond the cost will be given to the family for baby needs.

You can contribute to **The Baby Liefert Lullaby Fund** on Sundays, by check or mail (payable to Karen Elliott), or via Venmo: @Karen-Elliott-75.

Thank you for surrounding this family with love and care.

Karen Elliott

From the Board of Trustees

Continued from the front page

Looking ahead, we are discussing several projects for the upcoming year, such as improving the Social Hall's lighting, installing ADA-compliant doors, restoring the playfield, and planning for an all-electric campus.

After 20 years at UUCB, it's been my pleasure to serve on the Board this past year. Our community thrives on the generous contributions of many, but we always need new leaders. If you haven't served in a leadership role yet, I encourage you to consider joining one of our many committees that work to sustain and enrich our community. Let me plant this seed: perhaps you can be the next "human bean" to sprout and contribute to our beloved community.

Board Actions August & September 2025

1. **Safety Committee.** Board members Kay Fairwell and Helen Tinsley-Jones are reviewing UUCB's previous safety documents as well as safety policies from other organizations. They are seeking individuals to join a committee to review these documents and create a current safety policy for UUCB.
2. **Governance Manual Task Force.** Board members on this task force are reviewing the current Governance Manual and seeking input from the congregation on what is and isn't working.
3. **Freestone.** The Board received a conditional purchase offer for Lots 1 & 2 from the Dwight Merrill Trust and asked the Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) to review it. The purchase offer included a number of conditions that would supersede Resolution 22-1, which the congregation approved in March 2023 and amended in April 2025. After reviewing reports from the FOC, the Board declined the offer and explained that the Board cannot overturn the requirements of a resolution that the congregation approved.
4. **Withdrawal of Congregation-Approved Funds for Major Maintenance Projects.** The board voted to approve the Finance Committee's recommendation to withdraw the remaining \$33,000 of the \$758,000 approved by the congregation in 2018 to be taken from the Board-Designated Endowment Fund to be used for approved major maintenance building projects.

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 FOC has the following items to report on from August-September 2025.

- At the August 6, 2025 meeting of the Board of Trustees, UUCB congregant and Freestone supporter Dwight Merrill submitted a generous offer to purchase Lots 1 and 2, with conditions, for \$130,000. The contingent conditions would have relaxed, modified or removed requirements, including milestones for repairs and Board authority to sell Freestone in the congregation approved Resolution 22-1. Dwight also offered a donation of \$20,000 for access road improvements. Together these funds are less than the \$250,000 required by the first milestone of congregation approved Resolution 22-1.
- The Board requested that the Freestone Oversight Committee review the offer package and submit a recommendation as to what action, if any, the Board should take.
- After deliberation on August 13, the FOC voted 4-2 to recommend against accepting the offer and agreed by consensus that there would be both a “majority” report and a “minority” report to the Board so that the Board had the full spectrum of thoughts.
- The FOC majority report together with an offer summary document prepared by Dwight, were discussed at a BOT executive session on August 27. The minority report was not available at that time. Two FOC co-chairs (Beth Pollard and Tom Tripp) and one

of the FOC Freestone Committee Representatives (Bob Moore) were in attendance at the beginning of the meeting to present the two documents and answer Board questions. During this meeting Bob Moore offered a \$60,000 donation contingent on Board acceptance of the Merrill offer. This increased total funding to \$210,000.

- On September 5, the FOC’s two minority members submitted a minority report to the Board which included the offer of the new \$60,000 donation by Bob Moore.
- The Merrill offer, summary of offer document, and the majority and minority reports are available on the UUCB website under Board of Trustees meeting documents, with a link on UUCB Discuss.
- At its open session meeting on September 10, 2025, the Board discussed the offer, and the majority and minority reports, to allow Board members and congregants to ask questions. Dwight Merrill pledged an additional \$40,000 donation for January 2026 to the Freestone Fund. Together with Bob Moore’s \$60,000, the new funding commitment amounted to \$250,000, but with all other conditions in place. Bob also mentioned that there were up to six to ten other donors who have already committed to additional significant donations. The Board then met in executive session after the meeting and decided to decline the offer.
- At this point, Resolution 22-1 is still in effect, including the first milestone that if \$250,000 is not raised by September 30, 2025, the Board is authorized and directed to list the entire Freestone property for sale.

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

Buildings and Grounds Committee

Thanks mostly to Lucinda Young, we have removed and donated our last gas water heater.

There are six water heaters on campus, providing hot water to our various sinks. Of the six water heaters, five have been electric, but the largest water heater was still gas-fired. Lucinda, working with Sunworks, one of our good neighbor partners, located grant funding, made all the arrangements with the contractor, scheduled the work, and in cooperation with Peter, had the Heat Pump Water Heater installed. The old water heater was donated to Habitat for Humanity.

Lucinda also investigated switching some of the other electric water heaters to more efficient heat pump technology (60 to 70% more efficient), but most of them were not good candidates for replacement with heat pumps.

Karin Werner covered the cost not covered by the grant.

Thanks to these two members, we now have eliminated one of our carbon sources, all at no cost to UUCB.

Please join us in thanking Lucinda and Karin.

Tom Tripp, Chairman, Building and Grounds Committee

Partner Church

You never know what will turn up when you dig into the archives. In this case, Rev. Györo Attila and seminarian Birtalan Bence found original correspondence in the Hungarian Unitarian Church archives in Kolozsvár. First is a letter dated December 10, 1921, from the minister in Homorodújfalú

acknowledging that the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley had chosen them to be our partner church. He also thanked us for our donation of \$100. That would be about \$1,800 today.

Also included was a history of the Unitarian church in Transylvania and the village, giving the names of several ministers as well as the membership numbers through the years. We were also sent a copy of a letter from the FUCB minister, Rev. Robert French Levens, dated October 8, 1923, written in reply to the correspondence from the village.

The differences between American Unitarianism and the Hungarian Unitarian Church were as evident a century ago as they are today. The letter from Homorodújfalú to Berkeley says, "Dear Christian Brethren." Rev. Levens's response, addressed directly to the village minister Rev. Paul Benezédi, reads, "Dear friend and fellow-worker."

There is a lot of church history packed into the 1921 letter. In 1916, one of the church bells was taken by the Austro-Hungarian army, while the pipes from the organ were taken by Romanian troops. The Churches were responsible for local schools until 1883 when education was taken over by the state. This just shows we have a lot more to learn about our partners.

Does this bit of history pique your interest to learn more about our partner church? We hope so. Of course, we'll make copies of the correspondence available to anyone. Either look for our table on Sundays, or contact Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com.

Social Justice Council

This year our quarterly September potluck was the Carnival of Care. We opened the event for all to come and have fun learning about the opportunities available to participate. Ten tables were set up in the Social Hall to highlight the projects our members are passionate about and organize for UUCBers to engage in the Common Good.

Climate Justice Committee, Immigrant Solidarity Project, Working to Overcome White Supremacy, Greater Richmond Interfaith Project, Tiny House Village, Supporting Equity in Berkeley Schools, Good Neighbor, Civic Action, PRIDE Project, World Peace Committee, and the Partner Church Program all had activities, information, and fun to offer.

While we sat down to enjoy a delicious (and bountiful!) potluck, Rainbow Cyndy, the ringmaster clown, doled out raffle tickets to newcomers and visitors and distributed coded nametags to start the journey through our Carnival of Care. There, one earned a raffle ticket by stopping at a table and engaging in an action planned for the project to build the common good. Circus music tinkled in the background and fresh popcorn and real lemonade were on hand to sustain us in our journeys, until it was time to draw tickets to win a prize.

Everyone had a good time and learned more about what the Social Justice Council is doing in our community.

The next SJC meeting will be on Zoom on October 8 at 7:00 PM.

News from our Projects:

The **Climate Justice Committee's** work with the church community has earned UUCB Green Sanctuary Status from the UUA. What a wonderful feather in our cap for the investments we've made in greening our church and community. A new heat pump water heater was installed to replace the last gas water heater in our plant. We look ahead to more work, especially to explore partnerships with community organizations serving those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The **Immigrant Solidarity Project** has been standing vigil at the San Francisco and Concord immigration courts on Tuesdays over the noon hour. Please join us, in partnership with the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity. Contact Jennifer McDougall or Francey Liefert to get involved!

HIP continues its community read of *The Beadworkers* by Beth Piatote into October, with meetings on October 5 and October 21 from 1:00 to 2:30 pm in the Fireside Room. The meeting on the 21st will feature an in-person talk with the author!

As always, look for more justice actions to participate in at the SJC and Civic Action tables on Sundays.

A Legacy of Grace: Honoring Grace Ulp



Grace Ulp, who passed away in October 2024 at age 98, was a guiding force of nature at UUCB for over 70 years. A member since 1954, she helped shape nearly every aspect of church life—administration, governance, worship, and community.

Grace served as our lead office administrator for nearly two decades and later as bookkeeper. She was a steady, albeit spicy, presence on the Board of Trustees, Finance Committee, Ministerial Search Committees, Membership Committee, and Endowment Committee. Her insight was widely sought and deeply trusted.

Above all, Grace loved to sing. From 1961 on, she sang in the choir. She directed the children's choir in the early 1970s, performed in church musicals, and sewed costumes and hats. Her voice—both musical and moral—resonated from the pulpit and in key moments of our collective life. Grace helped bring our community to life. Her legacy continues through her daughters—Luana, Elaine, and Kathleen—all active members and choir singers today.

In 2016, accepting UUCB's Doctor of Durability award at age 90, Grace posed existential questions to the congregation: "What kind of world do we want? Who will speak for me when I'm gone? My tribe? My church? What will help us bend toward a better, kindlier, more humane world? What will keep my church healthy?"

Her answer: "Endowment—which lasts."

Even after stepping back from choir, she stayed engaged—especially with the Endowment Committee. In that spirit, she established the Building Endowment Fund "...to keep a house for my tribe, to ask the important questions... and help keep building the world we want." She launched it with \$30,000 in 2014, added \$20,000 in 2022, and inspired others to contribute. Her final gift—an estate bequest of \$560,000—brought the fund's value to over \$675,000. Her foresight will help sustain our campus for generations.

Grace's vision lives on through the Maybeck Legacy Society, now over three dozen members strong. If you've included UUCB in your estate plans—or would like to—you, too, can help keep UUCB vibrant for decades to come. The Endowment Committee welcomes your questions at endowment@uucb.org.

Anita Mermel, Endowment Committee

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 kathryn@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

Kay Fairwell, President
Pier Sun Ho, Vice-President
Selene Fabiano, Secretary
Lisa Maynard, Treasurer
Michael DeWitt
Kristen Jensen
Beth Jerde
Carla McCasland
David Rosales
Helen Tinsley-Jones
Helen Toy

Program Council

Marta Tobey (Convener)
Carisa Orwig (Family Ministry)
Victoria Bowen (Membership)
Tom Tripp (Buildings & Grounds)
Cynthia Greenleaf (Social Justice)
Barbara Cullinane (Pastoral Care)
Marin Fischer, Virginia Frederick and June Sheffield (Music)
Jim Gasperini (Communications)
Ann Harlow (Fundraising and Hospitality)
Lonnie Moseley (Adult Religious Exploration)
Lenore Ralston (Chalice Circles and Finance)
Kay Fairwell + David Rosales (Board Liaisons)

Staff (partial list)

Minister: Rev. Marcus Liefert
revmarcus@uucb.org 510-525-0302 ext. 303
Minister for Congregational Life: Rev. Dr. Kathryn Jay
kathryn@uucb.org 510-525-0302 ext. 307
Operations Director: Janae Heard
janae@uucb.org, 510-525-0302 ext. 306
Membership and Engagement Mgr.: Charis Domador
connections@uucb.org, 510-525-0302 ext. 304
Facilities Manager: Peter Barnholdt
peter@uucb.org, 510-525-0302 ext. 308