
December 2025

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley
Vol. 84 #12

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

Holiday Remembrance Activities

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 be stressful and/or have sad memories. You may:

- **Remind us** of persons for whom 2025 has been a rough year and/or the holidays a challenging season, by emailing pastoralcare@uucb.org
- **Donate** holiday cards and put them in the box in the office near the mailboxes through Sunday, December 7, for time for sorting
- **Sort** cards, December 8-10, time and date to be determined by volunteers' schedules
- Children and families may **make and decorate cookies**, on Saturday, December 13 from 10:30am-12pm in the kitchen and Social Hall and/or
- **Address** holiday cards and **write** and insert messages, on Saturday, December 13 from 10:30am-2pm in the Social Hall
- **Decorate and fill** holiday bags of remembrance for those with the most birthdays and others who we know have had a challenging year, on Saturday, December 13, from 1-3 PM
- **Deliver** holiday bags and **enjoy** a visit with the recipient, from Sunday, December 14, to Tuesday, December 23. You may pick up bags and recipient contact information in the Atrium after church on Sunday, December 14.

Let us know how 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.

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

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



December Services

Sundays 11 am

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

December 7

People Look East. Rev.
Marcus Liefert.

December 14

Rock of Ages, Hanukkah.
Rev. Marcus Liefert.

December 17

Blue Christmas. Rev. Kathryn
Jay

December 21

Dark of Winter, Come O
Come Emmanuel. Rev.
Marcus Liefert.

December 24

Christmas Eve (5 & 10 pm)

December 28

TBD

Sunday Programming

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). Email Rev. Kathryn Jay, Minister of Congregational Life: kathryn@uucb.org

Humanist Connections

Sundays at 1 pm in person and on Zoom

Dec. 7 – Topic Selection for next month and Freethinkers Discussion. Harold Ogren.

Dec. 14 – Dennis Monthei will discuss “Who gets into the USA and who doesn't?”

Dec. 21 – Ray Westergard will discuss “How can we UUs stop Trump?”

Dec. 28 – Paul Ulbrich will lead the discussion topic “What is the Grand Jury and the regular jury”

Good Neighbor

Nurturing Independence Through Artistic Development

(NIAD) niadart.org. **Mission:** Through its visual arts studio program, NIAD gives people with disabilities the skills and experience to express themselves, be independent and earn income as an artist. This nurturing community of artists fosters experimentation, increases competence to make informed choices and increases connections among diverse communities through the commonality of creative expression.

Special Events

Dec. 6

12 pm Tree Decorating Party

4 pm Winter Songs Concert

Dec. 7 Annual Food Drive Blessing

Dec. 9 6 pm An Evening with UUSC President Rev. Mary Katherine Morn

Dec. 13 10:30 am Holiday Bags, Cards of Remembrance & Cookie Decorating

Dec. 13 2 pm Death Café Conversations

Dec. 17 7 pm Blue Christmas Service

Dec. 20 4 pm Church du Soleil

Dec. 21 4 pm Messiah Sing-Along

Dec. 21 Mist Tree Moon Circle Winter Solstice Celebration 1 pm (page 4)

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Services

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 (1/3)

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

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

Winter Songs



Winter Songs

Choral music by Ola Gjeilo
Chamber music by Mozart and Schumann
December 6, Saturday, 4pm
Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley
1 Lawson Road in Kensington
Free admission, donations welcomed
www.uucb.org for more information

Messiah Sing-Along



COME SING WITH US!
**HANDEL'S
MESSIAH**
SING-ALONG

December 21, 4 pm

come sing choruses and some of the solos from
the Christmas portion
and selections from parts II and III of
Handel's Messiah
with orchestra and soloists
1 Lawson Rd Kensington uucb.org
no one turned away for lack of funds
\$20

Holiday Remembrance Activities



Please join us in Holiday Remembrance Activities **Saturday, December 13** from 10am to 4pm. We'll create Loving Community and remember our members 80 and better and those we're aware have had a rough year. We'll brighten the season by writing cards and creating remembrance bags, filled with cookies baked and decorated by our children and families.

UUCB ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE

benefitting

The Richmond Emergency Food Pantry

Food Drive Goals

all specially requested by the Food Pantry

- 400 menstrual pads & tampons
- 350 packages of pasta (all kinds)
- 300 servings of snacks (all kinds)
- 250 cans of tuna
- 200 boxes of mac and cheese
- 150 pounds of canned corn or green beans
- 100 quarts of olive or vegetable oil
- 75 pounds of peanut butter
- 50 jars of spaghetti sauce



We will bless our donations
at the end of service on



Sunday Dec 7

Cash donations gratefully accepted!
(Please note "Food Drive" on your donation)

Mist Tree Moon Circle Winter Solstice Celebration



Join us as the Mist Tree Moon Circle celebrates the Winter Solstice from 1 pm – 2 pm in the Fireside Room on Sunday, December 21. It's the longest night of the year! It's the shortest day of the year! Ginger Frederick will be our convenor, along with Jim Gasperini. Bring items for the altar to celebrate the return of the light. Bring a strong voice, too, because a little sprite says we will be doing a lot of singing! Please note that December 21 will be a very busy day on the UUCB campus, and we will not be able to enjoy our usual cakes and ale following the ritual. We hold ritual celebrations respecting the interdependent web and the sacred circle of life. This is an eco-feminist, Goddess-centered exploration born in 1995 of the UU curricula, "Rise Up and Call Her Name: A Woman-Honoring Journey into Global Earth-Based Spiritualities". The circle provides a space and time for direct experience of the transcending mystery and wonder which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces which create and uphold life. For more information, contact Phoebe Thomas (Sorgen) at (510) 528-9428 or Stephanie Ann Blythe at (510) 517-8513. Affiliated with CUUPs (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) <https://uucb.org/mist-tree-moon-circle/>

Social Justice Council: Working in Community for Love and Justice

Immigrant Solidarity Project

[People in Chicago are actively using whistles](#) to warn and protect their neighbors from ICE! Increased ICE activity is occurring in Stockton and Fremont now. We need to be prepared when ICE comes to our neighborhoods.

The **Immigrant Solidarity Project** has purchased whistles for UUCB members to use if you don't have one. Take it with you when you walk your dog, jog, or do errands around town. Listen for whistles and take the cue to join and protect your neighbors. We will have a print-out at the SJC table explaining how to identify and notify of ICE activity. **Join the resistance.**

Francey Liefert and Jen McDougall

Climate Justice

We invite you to join the **Climate Justice Committee** (CJC) to help create a sustainable world for future generations. We want **YOU** to be part of our upcoming events and projects. We need to build on UUCB's recent achievement—receiving Green Sanctuary Recognition from the UUA—in order to maintain our status.

- In January, we'll send out at least 30 postcards, through the Postcards to Congress project, sponsored by Elders Climate Action.
- We're laying groundwork for UUCB and the CJC to assist Richmond's new Tiny House Village with landscaping to add needed greenery to the site.
- We're planning a workshop on plastics, focusing on reasons to reduce plastic use and how we can all participate.

- We are also planning an Electric Vehicle event for Earth Day in April: cars, bikes, scooters, and how to acquire them most cost effectively.

Let us know how you'd like to participate and give us your thoughts on our list of possible future actions.

Sheila Tarbet

Civic Action

We did it. We passed Prop 50! There is still more to do (of course). Please tell your friends and neighbors that Helen Toy and Norie Clarke have been trained to make a **Family Protection Plan** for people at risk. We can help them fill out vital information to take home and safely keep. We have bi-lingual forms in Spanish/English. A samples packet is on the Civic Action Table and has our phone number. Please do not give them our phone number. **You** will be the conduit to connect us to them to set up a safe meeting.

Norie Clarke

Good Neighbor

We want **YOU TO VOTE** to select our Good Neighbor recipients for 2026 at the **Social Justice Council** meeting, **Wednesday, December 10 at 7pm on Zoom.**

We prepared a short informational packet about the organizations you have nominated. On [UUCB.org](https://uucb.org), you can view and download the packet that includes the name of each non-profit, and their mission statements.

At the Social Justice Council meeting, you will hear from each organization that you nominated. Plan to join the Social Justice Council Zoom meeting to hear what these amazing groups are doing for their communities and to **cast your vote for our 2026 Recipients.**

Blessings Bags are Back!

About an hour before our Social Justice Council meeting on October 8th our Treasurer Susan Blair asked me what I knew about the finances for the Blessings Bags project. Well, it ended at the close of the fiscal year. Then she said that there'd been a donation of about \$884.00 for the BB. What???? What a surprise!

How the story unfolds:

Sometime ago a person brought in MULTIPLE jars full of coins—mostly quarters—as a donation. Probably the person spoke with Tess. An anonymous donation. These jars remained in the back office, sitting on the furniture occupying 2-3 sf, for quite some time. The folks who do the Monday financial count noticed these jars sitting in what had become Kathryn Jay's office; eventually they suggested a bank deposit to her. She informed them that there'd be a learning lesson on money for the youth. At the conclusion, the question was, "What good effort shall we use it for?"

The kids said, "Give the money to Blessings Bags!"

Depositing the coins took at least two trips to the bank on the part of Anne Greenwood because of the weight of the coins.

Blessings Bags had "retired" after two years, but because there is such momentum and interest, we are re-starting the project! We ask that if you travel and acquire toiletries (such as toothpaste, brushes, soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion) please bring them to UUCB and there will be a fuchsia box in the atrium to welcome them. We also need socks.

Our first assemble will be in January 2026.

Partner Church

Ah, yes! It's that season when Jolly Old St. Nick is celebrated. Except that the real St. Nicholas was hardly jolly. He was an early Christian bishop from Anatolia who devoted his life to saving others. He is said to have saved three sisters from being sold into slavery. Caught in a savage storm in the Mediterranean, his prayers calmed the seas and saved the ship, thus making him a patron saint to sailors on all the seas. The most outlandish legend attributed to St. Nicholas is saving three little boys from being made into bacon. Dare I say that's a little hard to swallow.

And so it is that the children of Transylvania, including those in our partner church in Homorodújfalú, set their boots or shoes out on December 5 in hopes that when they wake the next morning on St. Nicholas Day, they will find coins, candy, or other treats in their footwear. The children who have been bad can expect to find a twig or lump of coal in their shoes. Naughty or nice needs no translation!

Here at UUCB we have the children in RE class make Christmas cards and the like to send to their brethren in the village. There was great excitement a couple of years ago when we received a giant Christmas tree jigsaw puzzle from Homorodújfalú. Assembling the puzzle was great fun! We adults don't have to miss out on the fun. We'll have supercards in the Atrium for you to send your personal Christmas and New Year's messages to our friends in the village.

Also in December, the Balázs Global Committee presents "Balázs Global Program: New Directions" with special guest Rev. Dr. Lehel Molnár. The date is Saturday, December 6, 1:30-3:00 pm PT at Starr King School for the Ministry, 414 13th Street Suite 700,

Oakland, CA 94612. You can also attend on-line via Zoom. Please RSVP at <https://bit.ly/4q8KK4b>

As always, we'll conclude this report with the appropriate holiday greetings in Hungarian. Boldog Karácsonyt is Merry Christmas. Boldog Új Évet is Happy New Year. You know where to find us: Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net

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 October-November 2025.

· The Freestone Committee engaged a structural engineer and architect to develop construction plans for repairs and improvements and to file for a building permit for procurement by the March 31, 2026 milestone date. A subgroup of the FOC (Beth, Larry, Susan and Tom) visited the dome on September 30, and Tom had the opportunity to review previously prepared repair plans and specifications from 2017. He subsequently attended a site visit with the architect, structural engineer and Dave Wemmer on October 14. Based on discussion with the engineer the previous design dome repairs will be modified.

- At an Executive Session of the Board on October 24, the Board decided to reject the offer to purchase Lots 1 and 2 (although they agreed it met the terms of Resolution 22-1), overturn the prior congregational vote passing resolution 22-1, and send it back for a congregational vote on the question of

whether to sell the entire Freestone property, (Lots 1, 2, and 4 (dome lot)).

- The decision was announced in an e-mail to all congregants. An in person informational session was held on November 2, and a Zoom session held on November 11. A special congregational meeting for a congregational vote on the Board's recommendation to sell the complete enterprise was scheduled for November 16.
- At the regular Board meeting on November 5, after lengthy discussion by Board members and congregants, the Board reaffirmed by a 5-4 vote its decision to propose selling the entire Freestone property and hold a congregational meeting vote on the issue.
- The FOC provided a background information document summarizing what has transpired with Freestone since the FOC was established in May 2023.
- The Congregational Meeting was held on November 16 as planned, with Board President Kay Fairwell chairing the meeting. After lengthy discussion, the final amended motion to be voted was "Rescind Resolution 22-1, amended on 4-27-25, and sell or donate the entire Freestone property: Lots 1, 2, and 4." Electronic voting was available until 6 pm on Tuesday, November 18, 2025 and the results were announced the next day. The motion passed by a vote of 98 yes votes and 59 no votes.
- The Board will now initiate the sale or donation of the entire Freestone property. This most likely will be the last report from the Freestone Oversight Committee.

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

Atrium Renewal Update from the Aesthetics Committee

Thanks to all who responded to the Atrium Renewal Survey in September! There were about 55 respondents, almost all UUCB members.

The Aesthetics Committee noted common themes in its review of results. Here are a few take-aways: Consistently, people referred to the beauty of the Atrium space with descriptions like “uplifting” and “light-filled” and with references to the views of nature, the welcoming atmosphere, and space for connection and conversation. A few respondents described the Atrium as still cluttered, but less so now that tables have been limited. Some people like the blank walls (some haven't even noticed what has been removed!) and some would like to see color on the walls. Others suggested imagery that represents our faith and community. Casual conversations suggested that people like the Love-at-the-Center UU values graphic as a wall hanging. A few respondents stated that they miss the Rumi quote, which will be relocated over the Fireside entrance. A few people stated that they miss the words that communicated who we are as a congregation (UU Principles, UUCB Covenant, UUCB Vision Statement). The Covenant will be relocated to the Fireside room for now. Several respondents referenced the importance of the Black Lives Matter banner, which has been relocated to the wall above the office entrance.

A detailed summary of the survey was submitted to the Board of Trustees, Program Council, and Buildings and Grounds Committee. If you are interested in reading the summary, you can contact a member of the Aesthetics Committee (Cynthia Asprodites,

Karen Tripp, Lisa Maynard, Christina Creveling, Lynne Cahoon, Ann Harlow, Judy Sam, Jane Lundin).

When Rev. Marcus returns, the Aesthetics Committee will collaborate with him about next steps. We hope to explore how our UU Values can be displayed in the Atrium. In the meantime, we are considering how best to reduce the clutter at the entrance to the church offices. The staff plans to install an electronic bulletin board in the office window to highlight information about UUCB and upcoming events. We'll keep you updated.

Thanks for your feedback, ideas, and patience!

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

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

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Michael DeWitt
Kristen Jensen
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Victoria Bowen (Membership)
Tom Tripp (Buildings & Grounds)
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Barbara Cullinane (Pastoral Care)
Marin Fischer, Virginia Frederick and June Sheffield (Music)
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Ann Harlow (Fundraising and Hospitality)
Lonnie Moseley (Adult Religious Exploration)
Lenore Ralston (Chalice Circles and Finance)
Kay Fairwell + David Rosales (Board Liaisons)

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