
January 2026

Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley
Vol. 85 #1

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

From the Stewardship Committee



The Stewardship Team has been hard at work preparing for the coming pledge drive! Our theme this year is **The Fire of Commitment**, based off that great hymn in the teal hymnal. We're excited to get members and friends thinking about their passion for and commitment to UUCB, playing with the analogy of building a fire together, beginning with a SPARK and then IGNITION, on to a ROARING BLAZE and eventually arriving at SUSTAINING the BLAZE and ADMIRING the FIRE. Here is what you can expect this year:

We're starting early and ending late! Our kickoff and first speaker will be Sunday, January 25 with several more speakers in February and March, then Celebration Sunday on April 26, which is when we hope to have a final pledge amount to give to the Board of Trustees, who then use that to set a budget for the following year.

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January Services

Sundays 11 am

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

January 4
Ministerial Intern Liesl Dees

January 11
Rev. Marcus Liefert

January 18
Rev. Marcus Liefert

January 25
Rev. Marcus Liefert

Coffee & Community

Starts at 10:00 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

January 4 – Liesl Dees, Ministerial Intern, The Church of the Big Blue Dome: Landscape as First Theology

January 11 – Dr. David Belden, "Amazing Grace: How UUs Saved Me from Burnout..."

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.

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

January 4 – Topic Selection for next month and Free Thinkers Discussion. Harold Ogren.

January 11 – Harold Ogren will discuss "Christian Nationalism vs Unitarian Universalists"

January 18 – Marcia Bates will discuss "Proposed Constitutional Amendments"

January 25 – Albert Kueffner will discuss "Why don't UUs have a Trinity?"

Special Events

January 11

**Pathway to Connection:
UU/UUCB History**

January 17

Youth Group Gathering

January 18

Newcomer Q&A

January 25

Board Candidates Forum

Good Neighbor

Albany Thrives Together

<https://albanytt.org/>

Albany Thrives Together promotes health and wellness for low-income and unhoused community members through outreach, free showers and laundry, and other essential services. In addition, we advocate for deeply affordable housing options. We believe that for a community to thrive, each member must thrive.

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 at GRIP Shelter (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

Nominating Committee

Your Nominating Committee is proud to announce three vetted candidates for the UUCB Board of Trustee open positions for the upcoming 2026-2029 cycle! One current Board Member is seeking re-election. Two additional candidates were identified through recommendations from the congregation, as well as from our own vetting process. All three possess excellent qualities that will support the Board of Trustees well: David Rosales (Incumbent), Karin Werner, and Ryan Devine. Voting takes place January 25.

From the Stewardship Committee

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Remember: Stewardship is the annual task of asking each member and pledger what specific financial contribution they can commit to giving in the coming church year. If you're new to all this or need a reminder: UUCB begins a fresh fiscal year every July 1. So much depends on our pledges, most notably paying our staff a fair wage and keeping the lights on. We have a new giving guide to share that we hope will help answer that age-old question: *"How much should I give?"*

Other things to note: we're offering a one-time chance to join a small group meeting we're calling a Fire Circle where you can reflect on your fire of commitment. We're also planning an evening soiree for all early pledgers, wine and chocolate dipped strawberries at sunset on the patio, Sunday March 1. We hope you'll plan to be an early pledger!

Reach out with any questions,
stewardship@uucb.org

Your 2026 Stewardship Team,
Paul Hudson and Ariel Smith-iyer, co-chairs
Mary Gardner, Sima Misra, and Selene Fabiano

From the Board of Trustees

There is a natural stillness to the New Year. You can feel it without much trouble after the bustle of the holidays. The crisp air holds the promises of our collective potential. A new page has turned. What chapter will we write next?

I was deeply impressed by the [discernment process that Reverend Marcus proposed for the next phase of Freestone](#) at the December Board of Trustees meeting. The proposed process was thoughtful, thorough, and calls us to make room for deep reflection before continuing. Too often, we think of a decision as the end result, but in the case of the next phase for Freestone, it is the beginning. In order for us to take the next steps, we must first grieve together, we must reflect together, and we must deeply ponder the potential of this moment. Somewhere at the intersection of what we want to be, what we are called to do, and what is possible, is where we will find that potential.

I had never heard the words “discernment process” before, but I cannot think of a more apt description for the work we need to do. There is a spiritual, soul-searching poetry to these words which I think is key to guiding us on this journey. Discernment is the opposite of fast action. It requires consideration from us. It allows us to think deeply and to consider new possibilities.

In his proposal Reverend Marcus put it well, “In the spiritual work of discernment, we ask instead to deeply listen together to what

would serve the soul of our congregation, to how the sacred is calling us to respond to the circumstances we steward.”

In this time of stillness, I invite you to slow down and feel deep. What serves your soul? What serves our community’s soul? What are we called to do? What do we have the potential to become?

Happy 2026, and welcome to the New Year!

David Rosales, member Board of Trustees

The 2026 Good Neighbors have been Selected!

After a very competitive vote, the congregation chose 12 of the 21 Good Neighbor Nominees. Here is the 2026 Line Up:

Jan 4 – Albany Thrives Together

Feb 1 – Youth Spirit Artworks

March 1 – Project Second Chance

April 5 – Berkeley Food Network

May 3 – Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity

June 7 – No More Tears

July 5 – MLK Freedom Center

Aug 2 – Read Aloud Volunteer Program

Sep 6 – Through the Looking Glass

Oct 4 – Tiny Village Spirit

Nov 1 – Richmond Emergency Food Pantry

Dec 6 – Women’s Cancer Resource Center

The date listed with each winner is when their representative will come speak at the church.

If your favorite organization was not chosen, please nominate them again next year. And if you would like to show your support by

going to their website to donate before the end of the year, we are sure that would be appreciated! Also feel free to follow up and volunteer at any of the nominated nonprofits. Here is the [Informational Packet](#) with all of the organizations' mission statements and websites.

And [here is a link to organizations that would welcome volunteers](#).

Thank you everyone for your help selecting and choosing our wonderful Good Neighbors for the next twelve months!

Warmly, The Good Neighbor Committee –
Natalie Campbell, Susan Blair, Lonnie Moseley and Norie Clarke

Partner Church

This month's message will be short, and we'll let others do the talking! There's a video on YouTube, "The History and Modernization of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church," that was produced in 2012, with interviews of former Balázs Scholars and others. Some details are outdated (it's now the Hungarian Unitarian Church), but the underlying message is still the same. In the same way we ask what it means to be Unitarian Universalist, the speakers in the video talk about what it means to be a Hungarian Unitarian in Transylvania. The video runs about 65 minutes, but it is well worth the time. [Here's the link](#).

We'll bet that you recognize some of the people in the video. They remember us very well from their time at Starr King School for the Ministry (SKSM) Most importantly, they can answer the questions we have difficulty

answering about our differing Unitarian and UU ways of life. We would love to hear what you think about this video.

And in this New Year the Balazs program is undergoing big changes, due to SKSM now being an online institution. Watch for how you can help UUCB support the new program.

You know where to find us: Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net.

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 members' 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.

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Staff (partial list)

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