



Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Vol. 79 #1 January 2020

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

From the Ministers

At the entry to a new year, our monthly theme is thresholds. Literally, these are the places in a building that mark the divide between one room and another.

Metaphorically, thresholds mark the changes in our lives, from one era to another, from one type of being to another, from one year to the next. Indeed, the Roman god Janus, for whom January is named, is god of both the new year and of thresholds. He is traditionally depicted with two faces, one pointing towards the past already gone and one pointed towards the coming future.

Here at UUCB, we've been working hard to tackle one particularly troublesome threshold, namely the one between the floor of the sanctuary and the raised chancel, which requires navigating three steps. For many of our members, those three steps are impossible or very difficult to manage, which means that access to the chancel – and thus to full participation in our music and worship life – is denied them. (Technically, one can access the chancel without climbing those stairs, but only by going outside the building, entering through the music room, and coming into the side entrance of the chancel.)

A generous donor agreed about a year ago to fund the installation of a ramp, and after getting approval from our coordinating team, getting an architectural plan, and seeking a contractor, work is set to begin in January. It should take about four weeks, during which time the sanctuary will mostly be off limits, and the music room will only have access from its outside door (the lower level will also be affected because of wiring and other materials that need to be accessed). During January, worship and other activities usually in the sanctuary will be in either the atrium or social hall, and some other areas may be affected as we use them for temporary storage. All of this will be over soon, and your cooperation is much appreciated.

We are thrilled once again to serve a church that takes welcoming and inclusiveness seriously, and can't wait to use our new ramp in a few weeks!

In faith,

Revs. Christian and Kristin



Worship Services in January

Sanctuary, 11 am on Sundays

Theme for January: Thresholds

January 5: Burning of Grudges, Rev. Kristin preaching. In this first service of the New Year, we will prepare for 2020 with a ritual of cleansing and letting go of those things that limit or burden us. This is a service for all ages. No children's religious education classes today.

January 12: Beyond Knowing and Unknowing, Catherine Boyle preaching. We are a faith of seekers, questioners and wanderers. Join us for an exploration of lifelong faith development and why no matter how old or young you may be, life's mysteries beget wonder.

January 19: From Liberal to Liberating, Rev. Kristin preaching. Our faith is often described as a liberal religious tradition. But are being liberal or progressive minded enough in these polarized times? Join us as we remember our faith's liberating heritage and consider how we are being called to work for liberation in our world today.

January 26: Adulthood, Rev. Christian preaching. At 18, they say you're an adult. But you're not really until you're fully into the world of "adulthood," that is, doing the things one has to do each day, week, month, and year just to live. Our world increasingly disempowers us, making adulthood seem like a series of chores rather than a time of living into the people we should be.

Good Neighbor for January (sharing our offerings)

College Is Real (collegeisreal.org)

Mission: "CIR provides education, motivation, resources and support to low-income, minority students who demonstrate academic potential, have college aspirations, and who typically will be the first in their families to attend college. We succeed by having a professional on-site program director and providing each of our students with an experienced mentor."

Personal Theology

Sunday mornings, 9:30-10:45 am, Fireside Room

January 5: Hana Matt, teacher of world religions at GTU and Interfaith Chaplaincy; author, spiritual director, and counselor. For two weeks, she will talk about two influential women activists. One of them is St. Teresa of Avila of 16th century Avila, Spain, a nun who founded and ran many reformed monasteries and convents of Carmelites all over Spain, traveling to each one, writing numerous books, teaching, and trying to reform the Catholic Church.

January 12: Hana Matt, see bio above. This week Ms. Matt will talk about Hildegard of Bingen, who wrote music, poetry, plays and nine books, who continually preached, healed, painted, organized and founded organizations and monasteries, and who gave us a new concept called "Veriditas," or "Greening Power." Ms. Matt will explore the four ways that Hildegard gave to contact with this greening power of the Divine.

(Personal Theology, continued)

January 19: Dr. James Lance Taylor, Professor, and director of the African American Studies program at the University of San Francisco, author of *Black Nationalism in the United States: From Malcolm X to Barack Obama* and former President of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists.

January 26: Alex Pappas, retired College of Alameda instructor of world religions and psychology (40+ years), past president of the Theosophical Society in Oakland, writer, a student of comparative religion especially nondual paths such as Vedanta, Theosophy, Alice A. Bailey and esoteric Buddhism. He has lectured at various locations including Germany, Turkey, India and US. His book *Heaven and Nirvana* is a comprehensive text of dual and nondual religious traditions.

For more information contact Gloria Merrill (cudaviol@yahoo.com or 510-527-2681). Personal Theology Committee: Gloria Merrill, Barbara Rockhold, and Anne Wardell; Publicists: Kit Hewitt and Charles Wright; and Audio Technicians: Dwight Merrill, Mac Lingo, and Charles Wright.

Humanist Connections

Sundays, 12:30 pm, Safir Room

Format (most weeks): A 10- to 15-minute presentation followed by moderated, timed discussion and a potluck at 2 pm (bring a dish to share or donate \$5). Newcomers welcome! Co-Chairs of the group are Marcia Bates, mjbates@ucla.edu, and Anne Fitzmaurice, buckley@lmi.net. Contact them with any questions.

A discussion group to explore our humanity, values, ideas. "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning." (Fourth principle of Unitarian Universalism.)

Jan. 5: "New Year's Resolutions—Last year's and this," Lee Lawrence

Jan. 12: Selection of next month's topics plus short topics drawn from a hat.

Jan. 19: "How the Nordic countries do it," Marcia Bates, Diane Rusnak and Lee Lawrence

Jan. 26: "The cartoon character Little Lulu as a role model," Diane Rusnak

Special Events

Sunday, January 6: Quarterly New Member Welcome in the service and **All-Church Potluck Lunch** to celebrate new members and the new year. Please plan to bring a dish or beverage to share and label any potentially problematic ingredients.

Saturday, January 25:

- **Quarterly Buildings and Grounds Work Party**, 9 am–noon (breakfast 8:30)
- **Bryan Baker and Friends** fundraising concert, Atrium, 7:30 pm (see Music Matters)

Sunday, January 26: Candidates' Forum for Board of Trustees election, 12:30 pm, Fireside Room (election meeting will be February 9)

Saturday, February 1, 7:30 pm and **Sunday, Feb. 2**, 1 pm: **Love Songs and Chocolate**, Social Hall

From the Location Task Force

Lenore Ralston

Dear Beloved Community,

Many of you have asked when the Location committee would reveal its opinion of where our community will reside in the near future.

Many members of our community have been working on the location question for at least ten years. Our Location sub-committee (Ray Westergard, Don Klose, Bob Adams, and myself) recently reviewed all of the past reports since 2010 and concluded that the research regarding whether or not we CAN stay in our current location has been done, and done well!! Respect to Linda Laskowski, Abbot Foote, David Roberts, Paul Hudson, Susan Lankford, and many others who have worked tirelessly on behalf of our church home!

And the answer is Yes, we believe we can sustain ourselves where we are! We suggest that meaningful benchmarks be developed and regularly reported on to the Congregation: Membership, Endowments, sticking to our agreed-upon budget, ticking off our deferred maintenance projects, growing our church leadership, sustaining our current levels of staff support. We need oversight, and a check on the validity of our optimism and our pessimism. We are seeking a robust reality within which our community and future members may thrive, leaving a sparkling legacy of liberal UU values in the wake of current societal woes. And should we find ourselves unable to financially sustain ourselves, we have the excellent research done by the other Location sub-committee (Jean Hyams, Paul Hudson, and Abbot Foote), which has explored alternative locations and community scenarios. We have this in our pocket!

We hope the Board will adopt our suggestion of a five-year plan, infusing it with Board wisdom and informational reality that subcommittee members are not privy to.

And so we enter into a period where we need to worry less and communicate with one another more.

The Location Task Forces, supported by the research of David Roberts, agreed that working together as one body – agreeing to disagree while working together in Covenant – was the best way forward on behalf of our church community.

And if we can agree that we are fiscally sustainable for at least the next five years, if we CAN stay in our current location, do we WANT to? The question is being asked: Who are we, and what IS our mission? CAN we best fulfill our mission from our current location?

Let's find ways to meaningfully engage with these questions, using a smaller group format.

We need to really connect with one another and share our fears – our hopes – what we wish for the future.

Let's use our five-year breather to assure staff funding, make campus repairs, support current programs that are thriving, and to consider some NEW ventures!

It is time for us to relax and rejoice, to roll up our sleeves, and together implement the many ideas proposed by those who went before us with a few new ones for good measure! Maybe one of YOUR ideas!

From the Board of Trustees

Jack Duggan

As a board member of the church I am looking forward to 2020 as a real year of growth and positive change, not of circumstances but renewal and growth in spirit.

It seems to me our long period of transition with the retirement of Reverends Bill and Barbara, an interim minister, the search, our period of financial uncertainty, the retirement of Mary Ellen our office manager, staff changes, loss of tenants and more is over. I joined the board in 2015 and in the four years since, it has at times seemed chaotic. Long range planning often took a back seat to crisis management.

Now we have settled ministers, the Reverends Kristin and Christian have been with us for years now, at least three. The honeymoon is over. They know who we are and we know who they are. Tess O'Riva joined as executive director and has settled in and is beginning to give the board the information it needs for good financial oversight. And we still have Alisa, Diana, and Lissa. We have two good tenants who we think are settled in and happy. The cash flow crisis has been averted with the generosity of loans from members and Dave Roberts and his task force have given us a clear picture to work with as we face our financial reality long term.

So the turmoil of those changes is past. Of course, that means we're ready for the turmoil of the future but for now it seems that we have room to breathe and instead of the board and the congregation mostly trying to cope with our challenges, we have a chance to think about and choose our future.

I should say right now that among the questions raised is location. We are not moving this year. In the long run we may decide not to move off the hill or we may decide to move but there is a lot of work we need to do before we can make a decision either way, a decision for generations. One thing we've learned in just asking the question is that moving off the hill is not an answer to our financial worries.

I for one don't know yet which is best for us. Neither one is easy and staying is not status quo. And it's not a financial decision it's about our mission and what serves our mission best.

I'm not saying we need to come up with a new mission. Our mission statement does a good job of describing who we are:

The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley is to create loving community, inspire spiritual growth, and encourage lives of integrity, joy, and service.

It can be tweaked, updated, but essentially it works.

The challenge is to renew and inspire ourselves. To make decisions, take action, to unify ourselves around our mission. It seems what we need leadership in making our mission unify our community, certainly leadership from the board and all of the church leaders. The challenge is for all the leaders among us including the board.

So once again and as always the call is to being a loving community and solving the problems of institution and sustainability together.

Note: Each month a different member of the Board of Trustees writes this column so you can get to know them better and get a sense of the issues dealt with by the Board. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Board as a whole.

Executive Director Notes

Tess Snook O’Riva

I am very excited to be both looking back at my first six months here and looking forward toward the new year. The theme of thresholds is very meaningful to me, as doorways have always represented opportunity. Sometimes it’s the chance to start something new, and sometimes it’s a reminder to go back and get my car keys. Important nonetheless.

It seems very bizarre to me that I’ve been here for 6 months. As I look back on all that we’ve done, it feels like real progress. There’s been a lot of work done to understand our situation and each other’s needs, find common ground, and stabilize our community for the work ahead. I continue to be amazed at the deep level of communication people engage in, asking hard questions and challenging the way things “have always been done.” These are difficult conversations, but they show a high level of respect and loving community.

We have been asked to clarify the policy of member use of church when church is “closed.”

- Situation 1 - Closed for Safety (e.g. Evacuated): All meetings and events canceled, leaders of affected groups/events notified, signs on doors = No Admittance
- Situation 2 - Closed for [Situation] (e.g. Power Outage): Open during daylight hours with disclaimers, leaders of affected groups/events notified of nighttime closure (if applicable), signs on doors = [Explanation of Situation], use emergency/backup lights wherever necessary (e.g. bathrooms)
- Situation 3 - No Staff Available (e.g. Holidays, illnesses, inability to work, etc.) – Leaders of affected groups/events must identify a Trusted User to be responsible for Opening & Lockup Checklists. Trusted User must confirm this with Admin Staff via email. Leaders/attendees are responsible for their own setup, A/V needs, and any other support. Failure to properly follow the Lockup Checklist will result in removal from Trusted User list.

Looking forward, we are well positioned to complete many pending projects and really move forward on engaging more with our mission. Our accessibility ramp will be a visible reminder of how this congregation lives its values and embodies loving community for *everyone* in the community. We are holding interviews for the new Connections Coordinator this month to improve our ability to both reach out to our communities and reach in to best support our congregants. We will be reviewing personnel and safety policies this month before we move full force into the budgeting process. We are getting a deeper understanding of the current and historical financial issues and now accept PayPal. That’s definitely progress!

We have some amazing people that give a lot of themselves to UUCB, and I am honored to work alongside you. Thank you all, and Happy New Year!

*The Coordinating Team advises the ED and meets the (NEW!) **second and fourth** Thursdays from 10 am to 12 noon. If you’re interested in attending, please contact the Executive Director to verify meeting time and place. Questions for the CT? Email ED@uucb.org.*

Sign Up for Leadership Development Workshops

Tuesdays in February (4, 11, 18, 25) from 7 to 9 pm

Sunday, March 1 from 4 to 8 pm

Music Room

Want to enjoy a simple supper with UUCB friends and learn how to be effective leaders here at church and beyond? Interested in learning how to help the communities you're a part of change and grow? Then these workshops are for you!

Carla McCasland and Kathryn Jay will join Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt in teaching a shortened and adapted version of the UUA's "Harvest the Power" curriculum. At each class we will share a simple meal together, explore a liberal-faith-based leadership approach, learn about how communities operate like systems, and consider how we as leaders can help those systems grow in both health and size.

Everyone in the congregation is welcome to take part, but these workshops are especially geared toward council and committee chairs and new and continuing Board members. To sign up, please email Rev. Kristin at revkristin@uucb.org by January 15 and include any dietary restrictions. We need at least eight people to sign up in order to offer the class, so sign up and invite your friends and fellow committee members!

From the Treasurer

Larry Nagel

We are now five months into the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year and three months into my tenure as Treasurer. I think it is safe to say that the new Finance team of myself, Tess O'Riva, Diana Steinbach, and Monte Meyer and Philip Smith of Shining Star Consulting are gaining a foothold on the very confusing finances of UUCB. I am not saying that we have all the answers yet, but we are gaining ground. The UUCB books have not been audited since 2015 and, given the tumultuous financial events in the last year, it is more than prudent to audit the books. This will require a review of the books by a CPA who is skilled at audits, and the review in turn will require books that are in reasonably good shape. I hope we can move the audit process forward by February 2020.

The major item worth noting in UUCB finances now is that pledges to date are over \$60,000 less than budgeted. I don't have a good reason for this and am working with the Stewardship Committee to encourage congregants to pay their pledges. Hopefully, with the end of the year approaching, people will pay their pledges to obtain the tax deduction.

There are two items I could use some help with. First, I firmly believe that we should have an Assistant Treasurer, and I am soliciting volunteers. Eventually, I would like to see the Assistant Treasurer become an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees, just like I am. For the time being, this will just be a volunteer position. The duties will entail becoming familiar with the accounting systems in use at UUCB, assisting me in the oversight of all UUCB funds, being available to sign checks as needed, assisting in preparing reports as needed, assisting in preparing the budget for the next year, and preparing to ascend to the Treasurer position when the time comes.

(Treasurer, continued)

Second, I will be reconstituting the Financial Advisory Council that played an active role in UUCB finances several years ago. The purpose this Council is to increase transparency in financial matters at the church, increase the general level of financial knowledge of the membership, and ensure church members' financial concerns are identified and addressed. The Advisory Council will do this by increasing their own understanding of UUCB's finances, serving as a collection point for members' financial concerns and questions, including suggestions for analyses, acting as a sounding board for the treasurer in financial matters, and serving as ambassadors to the congregation by providing accurate and understandable financial information.

If you are interested in volunteering to be Assistant Treasurer or to serve on the Financial Advisory Council, please contact me at lwn@att.net or call me at (510) 558-0842 or (510) 502-6244.

Music Matters

Bryan Baker

Bryan Baker and Friends Concert: January 25, Saturday night, at 7:30 pm in the Atrium. A fundraiser for UUCB. Tickets \$20, sliding scale, pay what feels right. All proceeds go to the church's general fund. The evening will feature Mozart's beautiful and dramatic Piano Quartet in G minor with Marta Tobey, Betsy Sadewhite and Carol Schwamberger. One of the masterpieces of chamber music, it begins full of powerful energy and an endless flow of melody. The closing movement is one of Mozart's most joyful. Additional piano music will range from the calm magic of a Debussy prelude, to Liszt's brilliance and romantic élan, to the fantastical shimmering world of Mendelssohn's *Rondo Capriccioso*. Plus art songs and arias from Rod and Michèle, Meghan and Marcelle, Paul and Barry.

Love Songs and Chocolate on February 1 at 7:30 pm and February 2 at 1 pm, both in the Social Hall. This beloved annual event is full of beguiling songs and tempting treats, all in a relaxed, cabaret-like setting. Come enjoy the tunes and taste of the delights. Another fundraiser for UUCB; all proceeds go to the general fund.

Social Justice Council

Norie Clarke

At our December potluck we heard from 15 candidates presenting their organizations to be the recipients to share 11 months of Good Neighbor collections during 2020. Selected were:

College is Real	Regina's Door Studio
Youth Spirit Artworks	East Bay Center for the Blind
Crisis Support Services of Alameda County	Diverse Housing Working Group
Women's Cancer Resource Center	Emeryville Citizens Assistance Program
Interfaith Movement of Human Integrity	YEAH!
GRIP	Operation Dignity

All of the organizations do such amazing works for our community; we agonize over the three not selected. In February, the Council plans to review the selection process to try and accommodate more recipients.

(Social Justice, continued)

We continue to work on the Congregational Sponsored Projects. The congregation is now storing four of the Tiny Houses that will make up part of the communal space of Youth Spirit Artworks. We have been following and supporting Youth Spirit Artworks' petition to the City of Berkeley to give monetary support for their project. We are happy to announce the city granted \$85,000 towards their goals!

We are collaborating again with Pachamama for their follow-up environmental workshop on February 20, 2020, called "Drawdown" to lead to action.

The Literature, Film, and Drama Contingent of the Social Justice Council's Confronting Racism & Oppression Project (LFDC) had a lively discussion about *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, with Julie Rogers facilitating. On January 5 we will be discussing *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens, a different kind of whodunit that is a true delight.

The POCC and the WOWs came together for a communal lunch to reflect on our separate examinations of manifestations of racial prejudice.

Jean Bassel has been following the push to stop the distribution of coal by rail through Richmond neighborhoods, which is creating a health hazard. The city council has put off making a decision one way or the other. We will be watching for further developments.

We will be showing the documentary feature film *American Heretics: The Politics of the Gospel* in March.

The Social Justice Council will meet again on Wednesday, January 15, at 6 pm. All are welcome.

Endowment Committee

Lenore Ralston

In January we will send a small Giant Sequoia forest (seven trees) to the UU Veatch Program at Shelter Rock by way of thanks for the \$133,000 "Wake Now Our Vision" legacy matching money!

These iconic California trees grow well in New York, so the hope is they will grow strong and straight and remind the Veatch program of our profound thanks for their inspiration and generosity!! I would also like to thank those Congregants that participated and supported this effort!

We have already received the first disbursement of roughly \$33,000. The next infusions for our UUCB program will be coming in January, April and July 2020.

We have been blessed:-)

Partner Church Committee

Stephanie Ann Blythe

Hey, here's the itinerary for our pilgrimage to Transylvania next year. It's still a work in progress, but it gives you 90 percent of where we're going.

We begin in Budapest starting June 9. After three days we head into Transylvania for another three days in Koloszar, where the Hungarian Unitarian Church is headquartered. Our route to the medieval city of Sibiu will take us through the village of Torockó, a UNESCO World Heritage site. It's the town with two sunrises at certain times of the year. After Sibiu we stop in Vlad the Impaler's birthplace, Segesvár. When the main tour group arrives in Udvarhely on June 15, our little contingent may then head off to our Partner Church village of Homoródújfalú. We will most likely depart for home via Bucharest. The details for the village stay and departure point will be determined in the near future. Rejoining the main group in Bulgaria and Greece, or a Greek isles cruise are add-on options. Maybe these details will wet your whistle or whet your appetite! Join us!

Certainly, the biggest item on our agenda will be getting to know the village's minister, and we hope to meet his fiancé. The home-cooked meals served by our host families are always a treat. Anne usually buys embroidery from the village women who still practice this art. One thing we always ask is what can UUCB do to meet the special needs of the village and the church. That is always an interesting conversation. We know of several stalled projects that we would be more than happy to give a boost forward.

What can Anne or I tell you? What questions do you have? These and many more can be answered by contacting Stephanie Ann Blythe at steph62850@yahoo.com or Anne Greenwood at annegt1@sbcglobal.net.

Buildings & Grounds Update

The furnace in the Sanctuary is replaced! And under budget! And now we won't be in the Sanctuary for the month of January. The good news is that the accessibility ramp in the Sanctuary is proceeding apace. The construction bid has been awarded, and our architect is overseeing the work. We hope to have it completed by the end of January.

There was an extra hoop the county wanted us to jump through to cut down the 41 trees we were approved for, so we haven't gone out to bid on that yet.

We had our first inspection at the cottage and they closed us down until we test and/or remediate the asbestos around the water pipes.

Most maintenance projects have been dealing with various plumbing problems and leaks around the campus. If you see anything that needs fixing, please fill out a yellow sheet (Work Request Form), available in the administration lobby, and place it in the Facilities inbox.

Celebration of Life

The families of Bruce Harris (1924-2019) and his wife Marilyn Reynolds (1935-2019) invite you to a celebration of their lives at UUCB on February 1, 2020, at 11 am. Obituaries are at <https://www.buffalohillfh.com/notices/Bruce-Harris> and <https://www.buffalohillfh.com/notices/Marilyn-Reynolds>.



Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley

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Kensington, CA 94707-1015

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Covenant of Right Relations

Love guides this church.

The quest for truth and justice is its common purpose. To give thanks, listen deeply, speak with care, honor our differences, and seek and grant forgiveness –

These things we covenant with one another.

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 our Membership Co-Chairs, Lonnie Moseley or Paul Hudson (membership@uucb.org), or speak with one of the co-ministers.

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 by Kathleen Baumgardner and edited by Ann Harlow.)

WEB SITE: <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 administrator@uucb.org. You can also find both newsletters at the uucb.org website under “News.”

UUCB general discussion list:

http://groups.google.com/group/uucb_discuss/about

Email list for families: Email family.ministry@uucb.org

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