

Beacon on the Hill August 2018

From the Ministers

In one ancient way of thinking, there were four elements that made up all of existence: earth, air, fire, and water.

We know that other traditions had different ways of envisioning what made the world, and that science has expanded and clarified our understanding of the building blocks of existence, but I often return to this way of thinking of four elements as a useful metaphor. It invokes powerful and tactile images of our world.



These elements speak of the different things we experience in the world: the ground beneath us, the warmth of light and fire, the nourishing presence of water, the air we breathe. All of them necessary for life, but all with destructive sides, too. This is the dual reality of our existence.

As each new church year begins, we gather using a ritual called the Water Ceremony. This year's will be on Sunday, Aug. 26. You're invited to bring a small sample of water to contribute in this venerable ceremony. First created in 1980 by Carolyn McDade and Lucile Schuck Longview for the Women and Religion Continental Convocation of Unitarian Universalists, the Water Ceremony (also known as Water Ritual or Water Communion) is now a tradition in many UU congregations. From a piece on uua.org about the history:

As they shaped that service, McDade and Longview wanted to create a new ritual "that spoke to our connectedness to one another, to the totality of life, and to our place on this planet." They included a new, inclusive symbol of women's spirituality: water.

They write, "Water is more than simply a metaphor. It is elemental and

primary, calling forth feelings of awe and reverence. Acknowledging that the ocean is considered by many to be the place from which all life on our planet came—it is the womb of life—and that amniotic waters surround each of us prenatally, we now realize that [this worship service] was for us a new story of creation... We choose water as our symbol of our empowerment.”

This year, our water will represent Kansas City, where we’ve been for General Assembly, and Idaho, where we took vacation to visit family. It will also be the water from our household tap, the water that is in the swimming pool we cool off in almost every day, the waters of the bay visible below the terrace at UUCB, and so many other waters.

Each of us brings water (actual water if possible, though we’ll have extra water you can pour in to represent yours if you can’t bring it!) that represents a little bit of us: where we’re from, or where we’ve traveled, or what we’ve done. Together, those many varied waters form a single unit, much like all of us together form this congregation.

May it be so.

In faith,

Revs. Christian and Kristin

Sunday Worship Services in August

Sanctuary, 11 am

Theme for August: New Perspectives

August 5 – *Sabbat*, Rev. Christian Schmidt with Jeanne Foster, Worship Associate. In an anxious world, it’s more important than ever to find times to restore yourself. Come explore how, even in busy or difficult circumstances, we can find time and resources to care for our bodies, minds, and souls.

August 12 – *Overwhelmed By Love*, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt with Jeanne Foster, Worship Associate. This week in worship we will dig into the deep purpose of spirituality, a purpose that transcends the old tension between inner growth and worldwide change.

August 19 – *Mystical Varieties of UU Experience*, Jim Gasperini with Lee Maranto, Worship Associate. An unexpected, unearned mystic experience changed my life. It had all the four hallmarks of “mystic experience” identified by William James: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity. Searching for a place to honor and consider what had happened, I found a UU church. What place does mystic experience have within our faith tradition?

August 26 – *Water Ceremony*, Rev. Kristin Schmidt with Melissa Rosales, Worship Associate. Water ritual, blessing of the backpacks, and “thank-you” to summer RE teachers. Multigenerational service.

Summer Forum: Towards a Just World

Sundays, 9:30–10:45 am, Fireside Room

August 5 – *Inside a Muslim Culture*. Beautiful video of Azerbaijan created by Tony and Laura Bushman.

August 12 – *Stand Together Contra Costa*, an organization helping immigrant families through communication, community education, and civic engagement.

August 19 – *Meji Singh*, Ph.D., “Changing the Course of Destruction: Removing the Barriers that Keep Us from Peace.” Dr. Singh teaches psychology at UC Berkeley, was one of the founders of the Sikh Center (Gurdwara) in El Sobrante, and serves on the board of the Interfaith Center at the San Francisco Presidio.

August 26 – *Shahrnush Parsipur*, Iranian author and political dissident,

recipient of the Hellmann Hammett Award for Human Rights. (See Social Justice article below.)

Humanist Connections

Sundays, 12:30 pm, check kiosk for location

Format: 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). All are welcome!

August 5 – *Cell Phones and Smartphones: Who Uses Them? Is it the End of Civilization?* Harold Ogren

August 12 – *Is the US Pre-fascist?* Marcia Bates and Diane Rusnak

August 19 – *Feminocracy: What if Women Ruled?* Ray Nelson

August 26 – *How Not to Die: Evidence-Based Nutrition*, Lee Lawrence

Special Events in August

Sat., August 4, 8 pm – Roy Zimmerman in Concert at UUCB – ninety minutes of Roy Zimmerman’s original songs, a funny and forceful affirmation of Peace and Social Justice. “Sometimes I think satire is the most hopeful and heartfelt form of expression,” says Roy, “because in calling out the world’s absurdities and laughing in their face, I’m affirming the real possibility for change.” Help us publicize this to the wider community! \$25 general, \$15 students and seniors, no one turned away for lack of funds.

Thurs., August 9, 10 am – Aging With Grace is a new group for elders. See Community Ministry column for information.

Family Ministry

Merrin Clough, Director of Family Ministry

Loving Hearts, Helping Hands: As the fall approaches we've got some strong teams of volunteers: the Family Ministry committee and Youth Adult Team, toddler and youth group advisors are full. We are looking for a few more folks to join our elementary teaching teams. Consider helping in this fun and inspiring work with our children and youth. To learn more, click [here](#) or email [Merrin Clough](#).

Summer Religious Education: This summer our children and youth have been meeting some of the people who make UUCB a loving and principled spiritual community. Leaders from different areas of the church are offering a multi-age class that helps young people get a sense of how these different groups contribute to the life of the church. This class is for ages 5 to 15 and meets at 11 am in the Family Ministry office. Childcare is also available in the nursery for younger children. Older youth are also welcome to join us, or attend worship.

Aug 5	Explore worship and dance with Worship Associates Melissa Rosales & Cami Fuller
Aug 12	Welcoming with Paul Hudson & Lonnie Moseley from Membership
Aug 19	Caring for people at UUCB. Session about Pastoral Care led by Barbara & Patrick Cullinane

Fall Start Up: We are excited for the Family Ministry program to unfold in all of its fullness. Here's a quick rundown of key dates to put on your calendar:

Aug 26	Water Communion – All Ages worship service (Sunday 11:00–noon)
	Teacher & Advisor Training – click here to RSVP (Sunday 12:30–3:00 pm)

Sept 2	Labor Day – Special activity in the nursery for older children (Sunday 11ish–noon)
Sept 8	Parents Night Out resumes (2 nd Saturdays 4:30–8:00 pm)
Sept 9	Children’s Chapel (Sunday 11:15–noon)
Sept 15	Family Spirit Circles resume (3 rd Saturdays 4:00–6:00 pm)
Sept 16	Nursery Childcare. Fall hours resume (9:15 am–1:00 pm, extended hours for special events)
	Youth & Children’s Choir rehearsal resumes (Sundays 10 – 10:45am)
	Children’s Religious Education classes begin (most Sundays 11:15ish to noon)
	Middle & High School youth groups begin (most Sundays 11:15ish to noon)
	Open House for parents to visit their children’s RE groups (Sun. 11:45ish–1:00 pm)
Sept 21	Youth Night for middle & high schoolers (3 rd Fridays. time TBD)
Sept 22	Birthday Party at GRIP homeless shelter for families (Saturday 5:00–7:30 pm)
Oct 6	Parenting & Mindful Digital Life Workshop (Saturday 10:00 am–12:30 pm)
Oct 14	Bring a Friend to Church Day (more info coming soon)
	Reverse RE – children attend worship & adults go to religious ed. classes (Sunday 11:00–noon)
	All Church Picnic – food, friends, fun & bouncy house! (Sunday noon–3:00pm)

President’s Column

Jack Duggan

I've been thinking about what UUCB means to me. I came to UU to go to church on Sunday but in 12 years it has come to mean much more.

I came for community, for connection with people that wasn't work related, not a hobby, or a commercial transaction. I wanted to connect with people based on our shared humanity and the traditional Sunday church gathering seemed to be a place to begin. A few Sundays ago I had to schedule a meeting at the church. I went to the calendar to see if there would be a conflict. Of course, there was a conflict. There was a long list of things going on and that was just Sunday. Almost every other day of the week had one or two things scheduled as well.

It occurred to me that in some ways we're more like a community center than a church. Some of the activities were "church" related but many more were community activities, community organizing, writing, yoga, rehearsals, Buddhist sangha. We are as much a community center as a church. We are like the Jewish Community Centers I was familiar with in LA or even a YMCA without the sports focus. I think in this form there is a lot of potential for us as a community. As a community center we can tap into the need of today's "Nones" to connect and to be spiritual and without the negativity that's associated with "church."

At the same time I like going to church. I like taking an hour each week and quietly sitting in an assembly to worship together, to acknowledge that there is more to the world and being human than just stuff. I like to meditate together and to listen to a sermon that will make me think, will challenge me. I love the music. If I'm feeling more empirical than metaphysical I can join the Humanists or do both.

It's this mix of spiritual and community that I've come to think of as being Unitarian Universalist and particularly UU Church of Berkeley. We are not just a church for Sunday worship, we are a community bound together by our common principles that everyone has value, sharing the common goodness, that we accept people as they are, and together we search and strive for the common good and that it's not just us, the members, but that it includes everyone who comes to us and our community around us. As a community we seek justice and equity for everyone and we seek to practice these principles out to the world, Contra Costa, Alameda and beyond.

Coordinating Team Notes

Deborah Schmidt, Coordinating Team Convener

New Facilities Coordinator Warren Smith is settling in well. We are sad to share that, as part of the approved 2018-19 budget cuts, we are losing part-time facilities staffer Julio Vazquez. Julio's gentle smile and willing spirit will be missed. Luckily, he now has full-time work closer to his home and young family.

Don Klose and the other incredibly hard-working weed-whackers, Bob Adams, Lynne Cahoon, Paul Hudson, Jim Gasperini, Don Wollwage, and Joanne Wile, have cleared our property, met fire safety regulations, and saved UUCB almost \$5000. If you see any of them, be sure to give them a huge thank you!

Our safety policy requires that we hold regular evacuation drills. Our first is on the calendar for Sunday, September 30, near the close of worship service. Stay tuned for more details.

I want to express gratitude for the many who have pitched in to see us through this period of job transitions and ministerial vacations. I remain convinced that this cultural shift, away from expecting staff to do things for

us, and toward sharing responsibilities, is very healthy for us. The community that we invest ourselves in, heads, hands, and hearts, is the one that means the most.

The Coordinating Team meets on first and third Thursdays from 10 am to 12 noon. If you're interested in attending, please contact the CT Convener to verify meeting time and place. Questions for the CT? Email CT@uucb.org.

Thoughts from Community Ministry

Rev. Jane Ramsey, Community Minister

August, the last month of summer, the hottest and the longest for kids ready to go back to school and for those of us non-parish ministers eagerly awaiting the beginning of the church year.

Only this time, my ministry will be extending out into this wonderful congregation beginning in August!

Aging With Grace is a new group for elders beginning Thursday, August 9, at 10:30 am in the Music Room.

In this gathering we will share our challenges and our solutions as we navigate this strange new world. Aging and its attendant changes has been historically minimized and joked about over the years and most emphatically denied. “Age defying” brings 22,900,000 results when Googled.

We live in a world where to be addressed as “young woman/man” is meant as a compliment. This translates into “I am going to address you as what you are not because who would want to be what you are (old).” Being old is who we are and living in this world and coping with aging is our reality. Come and join us!

We will be meeting on a regular basis once or twice a month (yet to be

determined).

Please contact [Anne Greenwood](#) (510) 215-6620 or [Jane Ramsey](#) (510) 499-5204 with any questions.

Social Justice Council News

Literature, Film & Drama Contingent:

Andrea Brown artfully facilitated the LFDC's discussion of the powerfully poetic prose of Claudia Rankine in *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Next month, Shahrnush Parsipur will be our guest. She's a prolific Iranian writer with stories to tell! Check out her website: <https://www.shahrnushparsipur.com/>, or her Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahrnush_Parsipur.

Social Justice Potluck Dinner and Meeting:

Our July monthly meeting started out with the second annual "Congrats to Grads" as we celebrated the three 18-year-old church members who graduated from high school this year. Lonnie Moseley led the celebration to honor Lindsey Lam, Sidney Camara-Hurtado, Malcolm Dawkins and their families. Those attending took turns reading a line from "Prayer for Our Children," written by the Rev. Robert F. Kaufmann.

Enough funds were donated from church members over the last month to give each graduate a \$350 check, as well as an additional \$100 to last year's graduates. Lonnie emphasized UUCB community past support for those honored and in the future to continue to expect support as adults. Lindsey and Sidney were present and thanked Lonnie and the meeting for the moral and financial support.

Cordell Sloan and Helen Toy gave a report on the conference, "The Kerner Commission Report at Fifty." The original investigation and report on the condition of African Americans in U.S. society was commissioned by then-President Lyndon B. Johnson after the devastating riots of 1967. The final

report was so candid in its assessments that Johnson attempted to suppress it. Commission members saw that it was released before the president could order its shelving. The original report is famous for concluding, “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”

Five SJC members volunteered to engage with Youth Spirit Artworks, a Good Neighbor recipient, in their campaign to build a “Tiny House Village” for the homeless youth of Berkeley.

The Social Justice Council agreed to be fully involved in the campaign to bail out detained immigrants housed at the sheriff’s West County Detention Facility under the soon-to-be-terminated ICE contract, before they are transferred to much more distant facilities, away from family, lawyers and other supports.

Cami Fuller asked that the SJC support the Africa Library Project with donations, books and help in packaging and shipping them to Sierra Leone. The effort is in coordination with the non-profit, Africa Library Project (<https://www.africanlibraryproject.org/book-drives/book-drive-guidelines/plan-your-book-drive>) . There will be a GoFundMe page for the UUCB project and the council agreed to consider donating \$250 at a later meeting if other fundraising efforts fall short.

Social Justice Announcements:

August 4, 8 pm – Roy Zimmerman in Concert at UUCB – Funny songs about peace and justice. Help us publicize this to the wider community. \$25 general, \$15 students and seniors, no one turned away.

The next Social Justice Council Potluck Meeting will take place Sunday, August 12, at 6 pm in the UUCB Fireside Room.

We can help our immigrant neighbors! And they need this help urgently. and bring it to church tomorrow — or mail it Monday. You’ve

probably heard that immigrants at the **West County Detention Center** will very soon be transferred to other centers around the country. Currently, twenty of the 200 are eligible for bail. If they can't post \$10,000 allowing them to return home in the next few weeks, they will be sent far from their families, support groups and attorneys. EBIIC (East Bay Interfaith Immigration Coalition) and IM4HI (Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity) — both represented by Rev. Deborah Lee — have asked local congregations to dig deep, contributing anything we can to help our neighbors out as quickly as possible. **Please write a generous check (memo “Immigrant Fundraiser”)** and put it in the collection plate, payable to UUCB, or — better yet — at the **Social Justice Council table** in the Atrium, where you can sign up for the **festive barbecue on August 11**, hosted by our new members, Bill and Andrea Brown. They can host up to 60 people. Details to follow.

Partner Church Committee News

Stephanie Ann Blythe, Reporter

General Assembly is generally the last UU function that each year's Balazs Scholar participates in before returning to Transylvania. Rev. Emese Bodor, whom we hosted this year, was no exception to this practice. She was one of the speakers at the Torda450 International Worship Service, which followed a workshop titled “Torda450: A Year-long Theological Exploration and Celebration.” Anne Greenwood has a video of Emese's talk. It should also be available online at the UUA website. We all wish Emese a safe return home and all the best as she resumes her teaching career and chaplaincy at the Unitarian high school in Koloszvar.

Due to UUCB's current financial situation we have delayed our semi-annual Village Education Fund remittance to Homorodujfalu. We hope to send it soon. We informed the village minister of the situation and asked how things are for him in the village. Here is his reply:

In reply to the second part of your letter I have to tell you that we are well here. The weather it's a little capricious, so the landwork it's harder to do, but the crops are beautiful and the fruit production it's OK.

At the 1st of July passed one year since I'm here in Homoródújfalú. Now I can tell you that I like to be here, and I like very much to work with the people of this town.

I wish all the best to you and your congregation.

Your friend,

Attila (Rev. Gyero Attila)

The Transylvanian Partner Church Committee might take things a little slower during the summer, but we'll be planning our Partner Church Refresh effort for this fall. Feel free to contact [Stephanie Ann Blythe](#) or [Anne Greenwood](#) for more details.

Project Oversight Committee Report

Larry Nagel, Ira Nelken, Jane Lundin, Dave Roberts, Tom Tripp

On January 28, 2018, the congregation approved a motion to spend up to \$758,000 from the accrued interest on Board-designated funds for five renovation projects: the Safir Room, rafter tails, exterior sealing/painting, skylights and RE Building mold investigation. The motion called for the establishment of an Oversight Committee, to which the above five people were appointed. The Committee has met on March 25, May 17 and July 12.

On July 12 we reviewed the status of the design and bid process for two Bid Packages, developed by F. C. Devine Associates, our Architect.

Bid Package 1, Safir Room:

- This Includes new exterior wall, insulation and windows, new interior finishes to ceilings, walls and floors, new lighting, heating and cooling. Cabinetry is preserved.
- It also includes new skylights over the adjacent stairs and some repairs to the clerestory window in the Chrysalis Room (leaks have been a contributory cause to the Safir Room damage).
- This package does not include the balance of the skylights authorized in the resolution.
- The Oversight Committee conducted a detailed review of the scope of the Safir Room design, and has recommended that bids be solicited.
- The plans are completed and bids are due August 8.

Bid Package 2: Exterior Painting, Sealants and Rafter Tail Repairs:

- This package is generally intended to repair and secure the outside of the main building, and includes repairs to rafter tails, sealing wood and concrete and caulking windows.
- Three bids are expected very soon.

Members of the Oversight Committee will be available in the atrium after services on July 29 and August 5 to answer questions about the scope and status of the projects

From the Freestone Committee

All UUCB members and friends—and members of other UU churches in the greater Bay Area—are invited to a picnic at our Freestone Retreat on **Saturday, September 15**, 11 am–3 pm. There will be a barbecue lunch (potluck contributions welcome but not required), fun activities, conversation, relaxation, and meditative and worshipful moments. We hope that church members will take this opportunity to become acquainted, or reacquainted, with the Retreat, in view of the big decisions all will be asked to make about its future in the coming weeks or months. It's a great place to

bring the whole family. Carpooling will be organized and encouraged.

If you can't come that Saturday but would like to visit the Retreat, contact Bob Moore (510-913-1009), Terry Stokes (510-725-7850), or Don Klose (510-697-5307).

Some questions we've been asked:

How does the Freestone Retreat support the mission of UUCB?

“The mission of this church is to create loving community, inspire spiritual growth, and encourage lives of integrity, joy and service.” Group retreats help create loving community. Spending time out in nature—and many of the activities that take place there—inspire spiritual growth. Deep conversations and reflection there, and maintaining it in the spirit in which UUCB has had a country retreat for almost a century, promote integrity. Staying there can be a joyful experience, and it provides many opportunities for service.

Furthermore, the Freestone Retreat supports various UU principles, especially “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” It could serve our social justice goals by providing a place for urban kids to get out and experience nature in partnership with our Good Neighbor recipient YES Nature to Neighborhoods.

But can we afford to keep it?

Yes. The Freestone Committee is exploring various possibilities for repairs and renovations, enhanced marketing, reaching out to other UU congregations to resume using the Retreat, and other ways to generate revenues that could contribute to the financial well-being of our church—the opposite of being a financial drain. The Committee believes it should not be liquidated to pay for deferred maintenance on the church building, especially before adequately exploring the feasibility of a capital campaign and significant membership growth.

The expenses of operating the Freestone Retreat have never come out of the church's budget or reserves. Rentals have covered the basic operating expenses. Donations from people who love the place have helped make some improvements possible. Our plan for many years has been to fund additional work by selling two adjacent parcels totaling about 7 acres, but that plan was put on hold by the Board of Trustees to take time for the current discernment process.

Why is it not being rented now?

Because of concern about liability, based on a 2015 consultant report. The Freestone Committee believes any safety issues have been adequately addressed and has plans for further improvements once money is raised to fund them.

Has the property been steadily increasing in value?

Not during the recession, but in general properties in the area have been increasing by at least ten percent a year. The church's other investments do not have that kind of return!

What UUCB groups have stayed there?

Youth groups, men's and women's groups, family groups, young adults group, the Board, committees/task forces, Write for Your Life, Handicrafters, Mist Tree Moon Circle, and others. All reported having a wonderful time and much appreciation for the Retreat.

Has it been used by other UU congregations?

Yes, groups from the Napa, Santa Rosa, Oakland and Davis churches and Starr King School for the Ministry have used it numerous times. Their current leadership may be less aware of it, but the Committee plans to remind them of its availability in the near future. The Retreat is an asset not only for our own congregation but for the regional UU community.

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 a “pathways 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 now the **20th** of the month. Please try to be on time! **Questions?** Please email beacon@uucb.org.

WEB SITE: <http://uucb.org>

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 on 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

Social Justice email list: Email sejones1950@gmail.com