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August 2023

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# Beacon on the Hill

The monthly newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Vol. 82 #8

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

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## Executive Director Notes

Tess Snook O'Riva

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### Hard Decisions

Sometimes big decisions need to happen at UUCB, and there's not always the time or ability to go through an all-inclusive process. I personally strive to be as transparent as possible about everything I'm doing, including my monthly reports to the Board and these articles, and lift up anything that might need additional conversation at the Board level or involving the entire congregation.

UUCB is a business and has to follow certain laws, especially about employment. So, when there are personnel decisions, it would put UUCB at risk for lawsuits and fines to freely discuss confidential situations. That said, no decisions are made lightly, and a process is always followed. Everyone is welcome to review the Employee Handbook if they are interested in how personnel decisions are made.

UUCB switched to an annual contract model for all staff under Rev. Michelle's leadership. Similar to teachers, staff receive a letter of confirmation listing their job title, any changes to their hours, salary, or benefits, and calling attention to changes to the Employee Handbook by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Not everyone continues after the end of their current contract, but such decisions are only made after all other avenues have been exhausted and in accordance with our processes. Every attempt is made to support and coach our staff throughout the year and let them know how much they and their work are valued.

There are multiple current proposals I feel are too visible and important for me to make alone, so I'm following a process. I discuss options with the Executive Advisory Team, and if appropriate, take it to the Board or other group(s) for additional input. Who do we share our spiritual home with? How do we ensure our congregation and staff *always* feel safe? What does our public-facing presence look like? These types of decisions can quickly leave the realm of the financial/administrative and call out our values.



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## August Services

Sundays 11 am

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

### August 6

Rev. Jay Atkinson preaching,  
Worship Associate Don Klose

### August 13

Rev. John Buehrens preaching,  
Worship Associate Sandy  
Portillo-Robins

### August 20

Intergenerational Water  
Communion service, Rev.  
Marcus Liefert preaching

### August 27

TBD

## Coffee Hour

Sundays after the service

Join us in the Social Hall for  
coffee and a snack or light  
lunch.

[Exec. Dir., cont.]

There is so much going on all the time that I must rely on current methods of communication to let people know what's happening. To stay up to date on these and more issues, attend the next Board meeting, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 7 pm! I am also available for non-urgent questions via email at [ed@uucb.org](mailto:ed@uucb.org) or in person with an appointment. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

## Sunday Programming

### Summer Forum

Sundays at 9:30 am on Zoom (viewable in Fireside Room). Link in [The Week Ahead](#) and [Calendar](#)

#### **August 6 – Vocational Rehabilitation for the State of California.**

Jessica Groves, Deputy Director of Vocational Rehabilitation for the state of California, Policy and Resources Division. Jessica will discuss the wide range of services available for people with disabilities.

**August 20 – Peace Walk. Stop the Violence.** Florence Davis and Payton Silkrit, Organizers, will share the history of the Richmond Peace Walk (every third Friday at 6:30 pm starting at Nevin Park).

**August 27 – Sunflower Alliance.** Shoshana Wechsler, Environmental Justice Activist, will discuss the importance of reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and the work the organization is doing. Shoshana Wechsler is a 2020 winner of the Leadership in Sustainability award in Contra Costa.

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### Youth and Children's Choir

Starting August 20: YCC 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!

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### Humanist Connections

Sundays at 1 pm on Zoom

**August 6 – Research on How AI Affects Human Beliefs.** Marcia Bates

**August 13 – Topic Selection & Short Topic Discussion.** Ray Westergard

**August 20 – How We Cope with Loss of Friends as We Age.** Diane Rusnak

**August 27 – Birchers and Trumppers.** Don Anderson

## Special Events

### **August 6**

**Welcome lunch** and cake for Rev. Marcus after the service

### **August 12**

**Painting Party**, 9-12, to paint "blessing boards" for Richmond youth tiny house village fence

### **August 12**

**Freestone Work Party.** Lunch will be served. RSVP to Dave Wemmer, 510-406-1984, [david.wemmer12@gmail.com](mailto:david.wemmer12@gmail.com).

### **August 26**

**Roy Zimmerman Concert: Sing. Laugh. Hope.**, 8 pm, a FUNdraiser for UUCB

### **August 27**

**Harvest Celebration & Potluck Lunch**

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## Good Neighbor in August

### **No More Tears**

[nomoretearssq.com](http://nomoretearssq.com)

**Mission:** No More Tears is a violence and crime prevention program founded in 2002 by men incarcerated at San Quentin and concerned citizens both seeking to remedy the rise of violent crime in their communities and reduce the recidivism rate of returning citizens. They recognize the unique perspective of former perpetrators and value their ability to bring solutions to the communities where they once contributed to the problem.

## Announcements

### Board Listening Presence

**Randall Hudson:** call or text (805) 705-6157 or send an email at [rdhudson2001@gmail.com](mailto:rdhudson2001@gmail.com)

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**Join Roy Zimmerman once again at 8 pm on Saturday, August 26,** for songs that soothe your soul through laughter. His exquisite parodies skewer everything with humor. Roy has been coming to UUCB for over 10 years, and his concern will be a great antidote for our concerns.

You can buy advance tickets [HERE](#), at UUCB the two Sundays prior to the event, or at the door.

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**The Honoring Indigenous Peoples Group invites you to a Harvest Celebration** at UUCB on August 27.

- Celebrate the progress of UUCB's Three Sisters Garden with a blessing by Rev. Marcus
  - If you like, share surplus fruits and vegetables from your own garden
  - Enjoy a potluck lunch (sign up [HERE](#) or at the Info Table outside the office)
  - Learn more about the history and sacred meanings of the Honorable Harvest and Ohlone food traditions and traditional plants, especially those growing on the church site.
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**Upscale Rummage Sale, September 2-3,** to raise funds—50% for Freestone Fund, 50% for UUCB General Fund

**Wanted:** Gently used high-end clothing and accessories; world crafts; small art works; antiques (but not furniture); items that would sell for at least \$5 each, preferably \$10-20. You can leave your donations on the stage any time this month.

**Help wanted:** Volunteers, any time from Wed. pm Aug. 30 to Sun. pm Sept. 3.

**Contact:** Ann Harlow, [annharlow77@gmail.com](mailto:annharlow77@gmail.com), 510-559-3616.

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## From the Board of Trustees

Kay Fairwell

The Board meets on the first Wednesday of each month on Zoom, and visitors are welcome. For the Zoom link or to view a video recording of a previous meeting, contact [secretary@uucb.org](mailto:secretary@uucb.org).

What a wonderful time to be a member of UUCB—and our Board of Trustees. This is actually my fourth term on the Board. I served one term in the 1990s and two more terms in the early 2000s. And I have to say this is one of the best (if not THE best) Boards I have been on. Members are thoughtful, collegial, dedicated, and a joy to work with. I hope you are as proud of this Board as I am to be a member of it.

First, on June 18 the Board held an appreciation celebration for Rev. Michelle Collins who served us so well during her three years as our interim minister. There was lunch, cake, hats on and off, numerous speakers, and a memory book for Rev. Michelle to remember us by—and to remember all she helped us accomplish.

Second, the Board would like to thank our wonderful delegates for representing UUCB at the 2023 Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly (aka UUA GA). This year marks our newly elected UUA President, the Reverend Dr. Sofia Betancourt. (Some of you may remember that Sofia was once one of UUCB's intern ministers—as was our new minister, Rev. Marcus Liefert.) Another feature of this year's GA was a major milestone in the development of a new Article II of the Bylaws. You can find a summary of this development on our church website [www.uucb.org](http://www.uucb.org) (in the Documents section under Board of Trustees July 2023).

Finally, August is the month we welcome our new settled minister, the Reverend Marcus Liefert, unanimously called by our congregation. Rev. Marcus begins work with us on August 1. The current startup schedule is as follows:

[Board, cont.]

August 1: begins work

August 2: attends first Board meeting

August 6: his first Sunday at church

Through August 16: meetings with church staff, groups, and members of the congregation

August 20: first sermon

September 9–10: Startup Weekend with the congregation (with UUA representative present). Rev. Marcus's Installation will be in the spring of 2024.

Rev. Marcus's tentative work schedule is as follows:

Tuesday and Thursday: in-person meetings

Wednesday: virtual meetings

Friday: writing day

Monday and Saturday: days off

Again, what a wonderful and exciting time to be a member of UUCB. Join us as we take our next steps on this journey.

## Freestone Oversight Committee

Larry Nagel

The Freestone Oversight Committee is comprised of Beth Pollard (Board Rep), David Wemmer (Freestone Committee Rep), Alan Davis (Freestone Committee Rep), Tom Tripp, Susan Lankford, and Larry Nagel.

**First, we note that the Freestone Committee can really use some additional help moving forward. There is plenty to do and all that is needed is enthusiasm and the desire to have some fun working with a great group of people! If you are interested, please call Dave Wemmer, 510-406-1984.**

The Freestone Oversight Committee continues to focus on four areas critical to the success of the Freestone Renovation Project:

- Overnights for volunteers: We are investigating what needs to be done to at

least partially reopen Freestone for overnight stays by Freestone Committee volunteers. The purpose would be both to encourage volunteers and to remind them of why they value Freestone. The ultimate decision will have to come from the UUCB Board of Trustees.

- Fundraising: We are monitoring the efforts of the Freestone Committee to actively pursue funding for the Freestone Renovation Project. These efforts include applying for Conservation Easements with the USDA and perhaps other agencies, as well as the outright sale of two of the three lots. Finally, the Freestone Committee is planning multiple meals as fundraisers.
- Road improvements: We are providing oversight of the efforts of the Freestone Committee to work with Lescure Engineers, a civil engineering firm local to Sonoma County, to determine what is needed for access road improvements to meet the standards for safe ingress and egress. This will enable preparation of a cost estimate for the road budget process.
- Structural integrity of the dome: We are providing assistance to the Freestone Committee to engage Greg Luth and Shilin Jiang (GPL Engineers) to perform a structural analysis of the dome and determine what structural improvements are necessary.

If you have any questions, please e-mail us at [FOC@UUCB.org](mailto:FOC@UUCB.org).

*If you are new and don't know what "Freestone" means, see <https://uucb.org/community/freestone-property-in-sonoma/>*

## Freestone Committee

The Committee is still looking for volunteers to help with various tasks from committee administration, outreach, marketing, and fundraising to help with work party days (mainly vegetation control at this time). If you voted to support Freestone the committee could really use your help. The more the merrier! Please contact Dave Wemmer to join the team – [david.wemmer12@gmail.com](mailto:david.wemmer12@gmail.com).

We continue to pursue a conservation easement and are scheduling a site visit in the near future by a USDA biologist. They will better determine the environment resources that may qualify our properties for an easement. We also will be coordinating with the USDA regional manager for what other agencies and easements may be available. There are other agencies who are receiving some of the new federal monies and manage easements other than those available from USDA.

We also are reaching out to a local real estate broker for an opinion of the current market conditions for sale of raw land parcels. The committee prefers a conservation easement over property sale, but we need to be ready to sell the properties if conservation easements look like they won't be successful. We also are looking into other grants that might provide funding.

We hired a local civil engineer to advise us on what improvements to our access road are necessary to provide for safe ingress and egress. They have prepared a detailed topographic map of the properties, which will be very useful in design of road improvements and can also be used in the conservation easement or sale of the properties. We are planning a fundraising dinner at the church in September. And we also are planning another picnic day at Freestone. More details to follow.

## Partner Church

We hear that there will be a Social Justice Sunday happening this fall, and the Transylvanian Partner Church Committee will be part of it. Maybe some of you don't know that Partner Church is under the Social Justice umbrella. That might be our fault, not yours, because we've been quiet lately. Too quiet.

The Social Justice Sunday will allow us to reconnect with you. Too often, we are asked, "When are you going to Transylvania?" That is certainly a large part of what we do, and the Village Education Fund is also a large part of what we do. But those can't be the only things we do. This is why we need this reconnection among ourselves so that we can be better connected with our partners in Homoródújfalú.

So what can we do, and what will you do? Let's get your feedback. You can contact Anne Greenwood at [annegt1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:annegt1@sbcglobal.net) or Stephanie Ann Blythe at [steph62850@yahoo.com](mailto:steph62850@yahoo.com) We're all ears!

## Dates to Save

**Saturday, September 9** – New minister & congregation workshop

**September 15–22** – Berkeley Shakes performing *King Lear* at UUCB

**Saturday, September 23** – Bryan Baker & Friends concert

**Friday, September 29** – Freestone Fundraising Dinner

**Sunday, October 8** – Schubert & Gjeilo Choral Concert

**Friday, November 10** – [Matthew Fox](#) will be the this year's Lawrence Lecture speaker.

## 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 [membership@uucb.org](mailto:membership@uucb.org).

**NEWSLETTER ITEM SUBMISSIONS:** Submit announcements and articles by email to [beacon@uucb.org](mailto: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](mailto:beacon@uucb.org). (Beacon is compiled and edited by Charis Domador.)

**WEBSITE:** <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 [connections@uucb.org](mailto:connections@uucb.org). You can also find both newsletters at the [uucb.org](http://uucb.org) website under “News.”

### UUCB general discussion list:

[http://groups.google.com/group/uucb\\_discuss/about](http://groups.google.com/group/uucb_discuss/about)

**Email list for families:** Email [family.ministry@uucb.org](mailto:family.ministry@uucb.org)

**Social Justice email list:** Email [sejones1950@gmail.com](mailto:sejones1950@gmail.com)

### 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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## Executive Advisory Team

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Rev. Michelle Collins  
Alice Lemieux (Family Ministry and Program Council liaison)  
Heaven Walker (Director of Family Ministry & Lifelong Learning)  
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Lonnie Moseley (Adult Religious Exploration)  
Lenore Ralston (Chalice Circles & Finance)  
Cordell Sloan (Board Liaison)

## Staff (partial list)

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