2023-24
Annual Report







Unitarian Universalist
Church of Berkeley

1 Lawson Rd
Kensington CA 94707

About UUCB

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley is a welcoming and vibrant congregation. We joyously support spiritual development guided by individual faith, reason, and conscience. We are committed to serving one another, the church community, the community at large, and the global community. We foster a spirit of generosity and trust that encourages care for our church home and affirms diversity and relationships consistent with Unitarian Universalist principles.

Mission

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.

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.



Meet Our Leadership

REV. MARCUS LIEFERT
SENIOR MINISTER



TESS SNOOK O'RIVA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HELEN TINSLEY-JONES
BOARD CO-PRESIDENT



PIER SUN HO
BOARD CO-PRESIDENT



From the Board of Trustees

We are filled with immense joy and gratitude to celebrate the incredible journey we have taken together over this past church year.
Our congregation has flourished in so many ways, and we share some highlights here.

- **Change and Robust Growth**
  - Last August, we welcomed our amazing settled senior minister–Rev. Marcus Liefert! The celebration of his installation was an event our community will not soon forget, and we heartily thank the Ministerial Search Committee for their extraordinary work. We're delighted and thrilled to welcome Rev. Kathryn Jay, our new Director of Family Ministry (DFM). We were sad to say goodbye to our previous DFM, Heaven Walker, at the end of April and wish her well in pursuing her calling to chaplaincy.
  - We regularly see newcomers at Sunday services. You may have noticed that the pews are happily filling up! Since July, 2023, twenty new members have signed the membership book–a testament to the inclusive spirit and warm welcome that define us. We greatly appreciate our extraordinary Welcome Committee members who make sure that everyone coming through the front doors on Sundays is warmly greeted. The committee holds informational sessions for folks interested in joining our church and provides ongoing support to new church members as they build connections in the congregation.

- **Successful Stewardship Campaign**. Thanks to the generosity of our congregation, we have exceeded our goal of $500,000, which, among other things, will allow us to finally bring all our dedicated staff to UUA minimum suggested fair compensation. We thank our 2024 Stewardship Team for their herculean efforts! The commitment that we make ensures that our congregation remains financially secure and poised for continued growth and service.

- **Unwavering Dedication to Justice**. The Social Justice Council (SJC) and the Widening the Circle of Concern Committee are vigorous and vibrant with a broad and rich range of groups and committees whose mission is to educate and to take actions that promote social justice, both within our church community and our wider communities. SJC groups include the Good Neighbor Program, The People of Color Caucus (POCC), Working to Overcome White Supremacy (WOWS), the Honoring Indigenous Peoples Group (HIP), Climate Justice, Voting Justice, Blessings Bags, Summer Forum, Equity in Berkeley Schools, the Literature, Film and Drama Contingent (LFDMC) and eight affiliated programs.

- **Taking Care.** Our Pastoral Care team continues to do the important work of marking significant life events, both happy and sad, and ensuring we all have a listening ear we can turn to in times of need. Our Hospitality Team feeds our bodies with delicious snacks, and our remarkable musicians feed our souls with beautiful songs. We form deep connections in Chalice Circles, various meditation, study, and support groups. UUCB thrives because of the care so generously given by so many–those who nurture the children, provide ushering, steward the land and create beauty. UUCB thrives because of our highly talented, skilled and dedicated staff members, who are integral partners in the mission to put love and justice into action.

The Board is honored to serve this congregation and is thankful for your support, comments, questions and challenges that have helped us broaden our thinking and enhance our decision-making.

Below, we highlight Board actions taken over the past church year. Guidelines for the Board's actions are articulated in UUCB's Governance Manual and include fiscal responsibility, setting goals. making strategic choices, and promoting and being accountable for the long-term mission, vision and well-being of the congregation and friends of the church, past, present and future.

- **Environmental stewardship.** In line with UUCB's commitment to working towards a sustainable future, the Board was pleased to endorse
  - UUCB's Climate Justice Committee's engagement in UUA's Green Sanctuary 2030 initiative.
  - the electrification of our campus, as outlined in a report authored by UUCB's Campus Electric, Buildings and Grounds and Endowment Project Oversight Committee.
- **Kensington Protection and Community Services District (KPCSD) Request.** The Board decided to respectfully decline entering into negotiations to lease part of UUCB's property to the police division of KPCSD.
- **Right Relations**. The Board acknowledged that (1) it has faced some difficult historical issues and sought to provide healing for a former employee and (2) an improved process is needed for repairing harms that are experienced at UUCB, which Rev. Marcus will lead.
- **Freestone**. On the recommendation of the Freestone Committee and Freestone Oversight Committee, the Board authorized the listing of Freestone Parcels 1 and 2 for sale, with final approval of any sales transaction to be made by the Board.
- **Governance**. To ensure that UUCB's governing and operating policies continue to reflect and support the work and changing needs of the congregation in this changing world, the following were undertaken:
  - A significant review of the Governance Manual, with the adoption of a new version in February which includes the addition of a foundational section and revisions or additions to further clarify numerous elements related to Board Governance, Delegation to Staff and Leadership, Care for Members and Care for Financial Resources, the Endowment, and Oversight. Some of the key revisions included defining more clearly the purpose of the executive session, adding a board policy regarding co-officers, expanding the Conflict of Interest Policy, broadening the Grievance Policy in relation to termination, authorizing non-competitive bids under certain emergency conditions, and detailing several elements associated with endowment gifts and payouts. All the revisions can be found in the updated Governance Manual, available to all on the UUCB website under About/Governance.
  - The formation of a fully staffed Bylaws Task Force which is poised to begin a review of the current Bylaws.
- **Finance**. The Board has endorsed the work of the Finance Committee, Treasurer and Executive Director to review and clarify UUCB financial roles and responsibilities.
- **Board Self-Evaluation and Envisioning**. At a Board retreat scheduled for this September 7th, we'll undertake a self-evaluation and begin the important envisioning of our Goals and Priorities–a task usually completed earlier in the church year but scheduled for the fall so the new goals can be informed by insights gathered from Rev. Marcus's Ground and Horizon meetings. Stay tuned for updates!

- **Partner Church in Transylvania**– a 40+ year partnership of friendship, support and cultural exchange. At the invitation of UUCB's Transylvanian Partner Church Committee, Rev. Marcus and Board and congregational members joined the committee in an extraordinary Zoom meeting with Transylvanian minister Gyerö Atilla and 15 council members. Truly, an international experience of community, which we'll continue! Last year, the Transylvanian church sent UUCB a Christmas puzzle, which was put together earlier this year by UUCB kids.



Puzzle from Partner Church

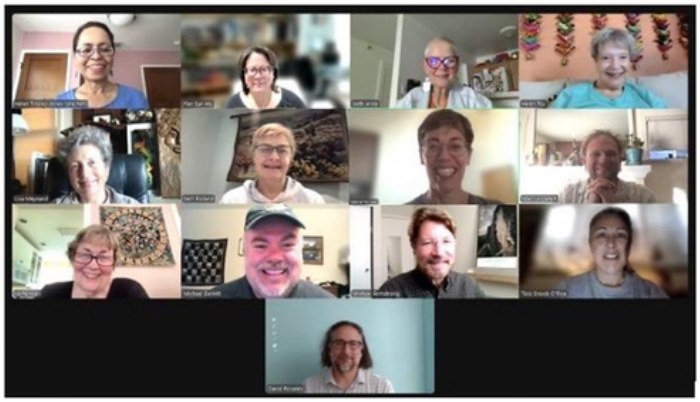
- **Flaming Chalice Awards** are given to people who have provided extraordinary service to our church community for at least 5 years, having been active in one or more principal activities in the church during that time. The 2024 Flaming Chalice Awards recipients were: Don Klose, Ladie Malek, Melissa Rosales, and Anne Wardell.
- **The Schweitzer Medal** is awarded to up to two members who are a supporter of Unitarian Universalist churches for at least 15 years and of our church for five years; who have participated in a number of church functions above and beyond the normal call of duty; who have been church leaders; and who have participated in outreach activities. The recipients for 2024 were Tom Tripp and Ariel Smith-Iyer.

We enter this new church year with great optimism: embracing our shared ministry with Rev. Marcus; living into our mission, covenant and the new UU Statement of Values approved at this June's General Assembly; attending to our spiritual care and growth; championing love and justice; engaging in courageous leadership; supporting stewardship and sustainability and building connection and community.

Your continued support and dedication are integral to the success of our congregation, and we extend our deepest appreciation to you for your gifts of time, treasure and presence–all of which make our community thrive.

Together, we work to shine brightly as a beacon of love, compassion, and justice in the world–always putting love at the center.

In Beloved Community,
Pier Sun Ho and Helen Tinsley-Jones,
Co-Presidents, UUCB Board of Trustees



Helen Tinsley-Jones, Pier Sun Ho, Beth Jerde, Helen Toy, Lisa Maynard, Beth Pollard, Selene Fabiano, Rev. Marcus Liefert, Kay Fairwell, Michael DeWitt, Michael Armstrong, Tess O'Riva, David Rosales

From the Minister

Rev. Marcus Liefert

My first year of settled ministry was full with the blessings of connection and a spirit of revitalization. The service of installation was a highlight of the year. I felt the entire church go all out to celebrate the beginning of this new chapter. I believe the joy and calling of that day will ring in memory among us for a long time to come, and support us as we live into our vision of vibrant shared ministry.

In June we ended the year with a gathering of 40 members and friends interested in building a community of worship artists. In the year to come, we will be experimenting with worship planning potlucks to organize as much participation as possible in planning and leading each thematic arc of services.

A major project of the year was a series of listening circles I called “Ground and Horizon” conversations that offered me a chance to hear members of our congregation reflect on the history of the church and their hopes for its future. We ended up holding sixteen sessions in members’ homes, engaging about 150 participants. Here are a few of the questions I’ve asked the Board and other leaders to ponder as we continue to articulate our history and identity as a congregation, and discern what we are being called to become. The full report can be found here: https://tinyurl.com/j83ycbv8

Questions about the Ground:

- Are there moments from the church’s history from its founding in 1891 to the 1950s (when our current mythology begins) that could be resources in understanding our spiritual heritage and the soul of the organization?
- What are the informal ways newcomers are taught UUCB’s culture? How do we tell the story of where we’ve been and who we are in a way that empowers the next generation of leaders to root new possibilities in the strength of our history?

Questions about the Horizon:

- How do we understand spiritual maturity, and how do we support those who come seeking it in their spiritual growth?
- How do we engage, equip, and empower new leaders?
- As the great majority of our congregation ages into elderhood, what about our church will need to change to serve the needs of younger generations? How will we tend to the loss involved in those changes?

It is clear that there is an energy of renewal coming alive among us. What forms it inspires us to live into are now ours to discern. I hope that we will take seriously the call that church is a place for people to remember how to live lives that are worthy, wild and whole. We are building beloved community at the intersection of art, justice and spirituality, which is right where the world needs us to be.

Administrative Year in Review

Tess Snook O'Riva, Executive Director

This past year has been an inspiring journey of growth, service, and connection within our church community. I am pleased to share our achievements, reflecting the commitment of our staff and their devotion to the mission and values of UUCB.

Supporting Ministry & Programs

Continuing to provide hybrid services and meetings allows many people to attend online, whether they are homebound, out of the area, or staying home with an illness to prevent contagion. Combined, our average Sunday attendance increased by 30% over last year!

The work of pursuing options for the Freestone Retreat is done by Committee members, and staff continued to be a resource and support their efforts. Applications, filings, fundraising events, and special donations have been consistently sponsored and completed by a dedicated group of members, and we are happy to have been a part of their good work.

Our commitment to environmental stewardship was reflected in educational campaigns for to improve the amount of compostable material in our organic waste bins. We helped train the staff and custodial team of our onsite preschool, The Good Earth, to separate waste. We purchased additional separators and were alongside the Climate Justice Team, physically separating garbage. Hybrid meetings and remote work reduce our carbon footprint as we continue to pursue our goal of eliminating dependence on fossil fuels.

Financial Stewardship

Our financial standing remained stable throughout the year, with over a 17% increase in pledges! We also met our $150,000 community rental's goal for the first time. Multiple budget hearings were held in May, providing an opportunity for a deeper understanding of UUCB finances. The budget was unanimously approved!

Although we are exempt from income taxes, UUCB is the administrator of two Trusts. An administrator must file applicable taxes and forms every year, and although distributions were current, filings were not. We hired an accounting firm to file the back taxes, so we are now in compliance.

We moved some of the temporarily restricted (aka Donor Designated) accounts into Certificates of Deposit (CDs) to increase our interest income and ensure all monies are federally insured.

Personnel

We onboarded our newly settled minister, Rev. Marcus Liefert, who helped to streamline administrative functions and refine staff boundaries for self-care. His Startup Weekend facilitated setting shared expectations for his ministry with members and staff.

Our new Facilities Manager, Peter Barnholdt, set right to work on the aging list of repairs and improvements to our campus. (See the Buildings & Grounds Report.)

Janae Heard joined us as our new Office Administrator, and her experience in facilities, information technology, and administration has made us more efficient and effective as a team. All with an amazing customer service attitude!

Our Sunday Tech Team of Andrew Brown & CJ Miles provides a solid level of A/V expertise as they juggle multiple cameras, slide shows, and sound cues for services, large meetings, and community rentals.

Last year saw incredible improvements in our financial processes and transparency thanks to our former Treasurer, the invaluable Carolyn James. She handed the baton to Lisa Maynard in the Spring but continues to answer questions and participate in UUCB's Finance Committee.

Church Development and Infrastructure

In addition to the Buildings & Grounds Report projects, we completed renovation of the Lexington Lodge, an amazing donation from Jane Lundin in support of our Ministerial Housing program. Proceeds from the rental of this house will support Rev. Marcus' housing needs for many years to come.

Storage and space needs continue to demand solutions. Our Facilities Manager has moved into the office across from the Meditation Room downstairs, opening the former office for the Facilities Assistant, Event Hosts, and childcare workers to store their things and have a place to take a break. Snack donations appreciated!

We also have long-term partners that need space. Two fire-resistant sheds were built to house items for the Kensington Symphony Orchestra, our choral risers, and additional music supplies. The East Bay Amateur Radio Club (EBARC) also installed a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) shed to house radio equipment and disaster response supplies. We went from no sheds to three in one year!

We improved our technology systems for better security, network speed, and documentation. Our two Wi-Fi networks have a more secure wall between them, protecting our financial and relationship management systems. We also receive alerts should someone attempt to hack our network. Please remember to check all emails for a uucb.org email address to ensure they are coming from staff.

Our new calendaring system improves functionality and makes coordinating resources much easier. We continue to adjust the display so that our website is more user-friendly and appears more readable on mobile devices.

This year UUCB performed the Annual Fire Drill and confirmed that the alarm can be heard on every corner of the campus! We have also secured a Chair and multiple members of the newly formed Safety & Security Council, who will be reviewing the outdated Safety Policy this fall.

Mission Driven

UUCB staff strives to use resources in support of our mission and values. Our Preferred Vendor program awards contracts to organizations aligned with our values. Our goal is to support green, local, and diverse businesses who are also committed to anti-racism practices.

Looking Ahead

As we look forward to the upcoming year, we are excited about the opportunities for continued growth and impact. Our priorities for the future include:

- Increasing our outreach as the intersection of art, justice and spirituality,
- Supporting more partners, trainings, and programs that help members and staff improve their well-being, practice their values, and support their spiritual practices,
- Continuing to make major improvements on our campus, providing sacred space for our mission and community, and
- Improving our infrastructure by upgrading technology, systems, and processes.

Gratitude and Acknowledgments

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our entire church family for your unwavering support, dedication, and generosity throughout the year, especially as I went through my own personal struggles. I also want to acknowledge our staff, volunteers, and Board of Trustees for their tireless work and leadership. Together, we have made a profound impact, and I look forward to all that we will achieve in the coming year.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership as we move forward on this meaningful journey.

Family Ministry

Drawing a robust group of volunteers, Family Ministry continued its commitment to nurturing the spiritual growth of children, youth, and families. The program began to teach the new Article II values even before they were officially adopted at the 2024 General Assembly, using a JETPIG reaching toward love as the mnemonic to help children remember the seven values.

We ran a monthly Celebration Chapel that welcomed all ages into the Fireside Room for worship and fun. Religious Education classes, one for K-3rd graders and then other for 4th-12th graders, used a wide range of activities to foster the spiritual development of our youngest members. Meeting two Sundays per month, these classes provided opportunities for children and youth to explore UU principles, ethical living, and the ethos of social justice. Some fo the many activities included: helping to make lunch for the congregation, painting boards for Youth SpiritWorks mini homes, creating Blessing Bags, and making cards for UUCB elders.

Our Youth Group continues to be a vibrant part of our community, meeting monthly to provide middle and high school students a chance to deepen their understanding of Unitarian Universalism and explore personal growth. Even better, teens had fun at the church!

A Fall Festival featured Halloween-related activities and an ever-popular Bouncy House. Our annual Easter Egg Hunt is a longstanding tradition that remains a highlight for families with young children, drawing many newcomers to UUCB. As with previous years, hundreds of colorful eggs were hidden around the church grounds, allowing children and parents alike to share in the joy of spring while strengthening connections within our congregation.

Understanding the unique challenges of parenting, our Family Ministry continued its monthly Parents Night Out as a way to support the well-being of caregivers. This program offers parents a well-deserved break while their children engage in supervised activities that are fun and aligned with UU values. We also held a Parent/Grandparent Discussion Group twice a month that attracted both regular attendees and welcomed newcomers.

Next year, we will invite children to continue the tradition of a monthly Celebration Chapel and also invite children to RE every Sunday. We plan to offer a 4th-6th grade OWL class in the spring, and do more to help families build community together.

Music

BRYAN BAKER, MUSIC DIRECTOR
MARIN FISCHER, VIRGINIA FREDERICK, PHYLLIS VAN KRANENBURGH
MUSIC COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

From July 2023 through June 2024 choir met in person most Thursday evenings each month. Mask requirements were dropped though some members continued to wear them. While choir participation is still lower than pre pandemic times, we are slowly rebuilding and have some new members. We sang on more Sundays this year than last, though less often than before the pandemic. Bryan organized in person concerts, recitals, and also arranged special music for Sunday services. He continued to recruit song leaders in singing hymns in Sunday services.

Our Music Director, Bryan Baker continues to bring us spiritually uplifting and beautiful music from many musical traditions, so that we can continue to provide a musical ministry to the church congregation and wider church community. Katie Lipka continued her excellent work directing the Youth and Children's Choir. Katya Kolesnikova continued to wow us with her extraordinary organ music both in service and in recital.

During the period of 2023-2024 the music program exceeded its $12,500 fund raising budget for the church's general fund. The music committee, led by Marin Fischer, Virginia Frederick, and Phyllis van Kranenburgh, coordinated and supported fundraising events such as Bryan Baker and Friends, Durufle's Requiem with the choir from UUSF and the Kensington Symphony Orchestra, Love Songs and Chocolate, and Sing Along Messiah.

As the new year begins, we are gradually bringing back many of our excellent singers and hope new members will join us. We are excited and expect the coming year will bring us all together once again to share amazing music with the church community.

Membership

Our Membership work this year contributed to the mission of UUCB!

The Membership Co- Chairs are Victoria Bowen and Lonnie Moseley. Our genuine and warm Welcome Team grew to ten steady volunteers. Continuing in this role are Victoria Bowen, Lonnie Moseley when in town, Christina Creveling, Susan Blair, Debi Clifford, and Paul Hudson. When Lonnie is not in person, she is our online Welcome Team Member for UUCB's online worship viewing community. New to the role are Michelle Fahlsing, Jennifer McDougall, Dave Belden and Selene Fabiano. We thanked Lisa Maynard and Diana Smith for their service as they transitioned off.

Every Sunday, several members of this team greet new attendees and long time congregants. We assist with name badges, direct newcomers, capture their contact information and answer questions. We invite all to stay for coffee and complimentary lunch. The weekly lunches are a new offering of the Hospitality Team and have been very effective in creating a welcoming environment. One change we implemented: We stopped asking all to sign in via the iPad and Breeze as the technology did not go as smoothly as hoped. We reluctantly concluded that the value of having attendance records did not outweigh the time and effort volunteers and staff put in to try to get the digital sign-in to work. Welcome Volunteers also staff the table and talk with Newcomers in the Atrium after the service.

On June 15, 2024, Lonnie and Victoria hosted the Second Annual Thank You Gathering at Victoria's home for the members of the Welcome Team. We served refreshments, presented an overview of the year's work, solicited feedback, shared meaningful as well as disconcerting moments in the role, and thanked all for their contribution to the church.

We held three Membership Informational Meetings, all in person. (The dates were July 16, 2023, Jan. 21, 2024 and April 14, 2024.) As in previous years, meetings were initially organized and hosted by the Co -Chairs with our resident UU historian Rev. Jay Atkinson who provided leadership and history. As the year proceeded, our newly settled Rev. Marcus Liefert went from participating to fully co-leading the final one with Rev. Atkinson. The meetings provided participants with an opportunity to share their journey, learn about UU and UUCB and meet lay leaders and ministers in a small group environment with lunch served.

A new 2024 initiative: Under Rev. Liefert's direction, Charis Domador, our Connections Coordinator, organized (and Victoria joined in) three Newcomer Q and A meetings in the Fireside Room. (These were held on Feb. 18, March 17 and May 19, 2024.) Q and A's are to be held monthly on a regular third Sunday, as scheduling allows, and are intended to be an informal space for newcomers to learn something about us, to share about themselves, meet others, and most importantly get officially connected with Charis for follow up guidance and connection.

Starting this Fall, 2024, Reverend Liefert and Charis will be organizing the schedule and curriculum for the Informational Meetings. Participation will be encouraged only for people quite interested in becoming members, while the Q and A's will be available for initial interest. Also the Information Meetings will be more content full and scheduled to take place over two Sundays rather than just one. The Information Meetings will be titled "Pathway to Connection" starting in the Fall 2024.

We held ten Book Signings in an intimate setting with Rev. Liefert on nine Sundays for a total of 20 new members this year. We held three "Welcome New Members on the Chancel" rituals during services on Sept 24., 2023, Nov. 5, 2023 and June 2, 2024. This ceremony gives the new members the opportunity to be formally welcomed by and into the congregation. We give each new member a rose, so congregants can greet them individually afterwards.

The 20 New Members we welcomed into covenant with the Congregation between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024 are: Ben Barron, Judy Barron, Dave Belden, Russ Blume, Bill Burmester, Jennie Chuang, Ryan Devine, Mary Gardner, Justin Hardy, Allan Hoban, Harold Dean James, Marsha Lanier, Francey Liefert, Jennifer McDougall, Francie Nurske, Norma Piehl, Janet Robinson, Chris Shatterly, Hillary Shatterly, and Kathleen Slobin.

Follow up of new members: Last year we had hoped to launch a systematic follow up contact/interview with each new member. This did not happen; we still would like to if volunteer time is available. We continued to get the new member pictures in the Directory and assist them with access, and connection plus the welcome on the Chancel. We implemented two new initiatives: 1) Staff send a certificate of Membership with the official joining date and signed by our Minister and Co-Presidents of the Board and 2) The Board invites all members who newly joined in a designated time period to attend the Board meeting. We hope this will assist in integrating new members and encouraging them to serve in governance positions in the future.

In addition, we receive many contacts via our Website Newcomer form, which we answer promptly. We work closely with office staff especially Charis Domador and Janae Heard for Newcomer and New Member support. Membership thanks these staff members for their creativity, consistency and patience. Charis has taken a big role in Welcoming. She started coming to church two Sundays/month. She makes announcements from the Chancel, enhancing congregants' recognition of her as Connections Coordinator. As mentioned, she has held and will hold approximately monthly Q and A sessions. She created a very helpful trifold brochure for easy connection. We look forward to her increased integration in the Membership Team on many levels.

We look forward to continuing and expanding our membership activities under the leadership of Rev. Liefert in the upcoming 2024-2025 Church Year.

Chalice Circles

Because of the amazing facilitators who volunteered their time and talents this past year, UUCB Chalice Circles were able to provide essential and meaningful connections within our community during a time of great need. Our 13 different Chalice Circles, run by 13 facilitators, fostered significant connections between around 120 participants. We found that, as ever, both newcomers and long-time UUCB members long for that sense of connection that is nurtured in a small group.

Our facilitators met with participants both in person and on line. The in person Circles depended on what facilitators felt able to offer, and depended on room and accessibility issues.

While Chalice Circles were once o only offered for 16 weeks in duration, facilitators have added flexibility to the schedule, and we now have a Fall season (from September to February) and a Spring season (February to June) with Circles meeting either 8 weeks, 6 weeks or 4 weeks during a session. There was a mix of afternoon and evening circles offered.

The 2023-24 Chalice Circle topics were varied. They included: Culture and Identity; The last Act: Life After 60; What are your Beliefs? And a group for educators. We had 8 Circles that focused on standard topics. Our Grief Group continued on after having been running for many years now.

Current team members: Lenore Ralston, Natalie Campbell, Cynthia Asprodites, Joanne Wile, Lisa Maynard.

Contact: chalicecircles@uucb.org

Pastoral Care



Barbara Cullinane, Chair

Pastoral Associates and other lay members who join us in pastoral care activities provide support, comfort and healing and embody our Mission of "Creating Loving Community." As lay members, Pastoral Associates supplement and complement the professional pastoral care of our ordained minister Rev. Marcus Leifert, who also meets monthly with us for support and training.

UUCB publications invite "referrals" through our pastoralcare@uucb.org emails, personal contact, and Sunday Memory Book postings of those who are celebrating or "sick, hospitalized, recovering, grieving or otherwise in need of attention and support." With our supportive calls, notes and visits, we help congregants and their loved ones celebrate, cope and mourn. We often work confidentially, avoiding the limelight. Since July 2023, we have:

142

46

87

13

- Provided pastoral care to at least 142 congregants (unduplicated number.)
- Provided opportunities for 46+ volunteers in Remembrance and Doctor of Durability recognition activities.
- Followed regularly 46 individuals, couples and families "of concern."
- Called regularly 87 individuals and 13 couples 80 and better.
- Written countless notes of support.
- Shared resource information.
- Helped spread the word about joys, injury, illness, transition and/or bereavement through Super Cards, Discuss List and publication notices, with permission of those involved.
- Co-sponsored, with Family Ministry, holiday remembrances of cards with greetings from our youth for those 80 and better and those for whom 2023 had been a challenging year and decorative remembrance bags filled with candy, homemade cookies, and greetings from our youth and older volunteers, for those 90 and better, younger people for whom 2023 had been a rough year, and Staff.
- Sponsored 111 butcher paper Super Cards, signed in bright markers with loving messages of support, condolences, and/or congratulations.
- Helped support non-church bereaved family and friends by making them aware of ways that church members can learn of their losses and better support them, through Circle of Life and Discuss List announcements.
- Co-sponsored with Rev. Marcus the annual celebration of those 80 and better, especially those 29 Doctors of Durability with milestone birthdays. May 5 highlights included homilies by 3 honorees, the presentation of certificates, greetings and flowers from our children, and a special luncheon.

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Pastoral Associates are Lynne Cahoon, Debi Clifford, Barbara Cullinane, Dorothy Herzberg, Judy Sam, Kathleen Slobkin, Marta Tobey, and Anne Wardell.

Transylvanian Partner Church Committee

September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024

The Transylvanian Partner Church Committee fulfilled one of its primary goals by remitting scholarship funds from the Village Education Fund at UUCB to our partners in Homoródújfalu, Romania. Our Partner Church minister, Rev. Gyerő Attila got married in 2024 and we set aside non-scholarship funds for a wedding gift to Attila and his bride, Zsuzsa. Congratulations!
Anne Greenwood visited Homoródújfalu in September, 2023. Anne attended the convocation of the International Association for Religious Freedom which was held in Kolozsvár, Romania. The minister from the village, Gyerő Attila, came to Kolozsvár to bring Anne back to Homoródújfalu. While in the village, Anne met with the recipients of scholarships from the Village Education Fund.

One of the things that emerged from Anne's visit to the village was a desire by the Board of Trustees of the Homoródújfalu church was to meet the UUCB Board of Trustees. That happened in January, 2024, through the magic of Zoom. After greetings and introductions we got to the substance of the meeting.

We told them how often our board meets and where our money comes from and how the minister gets paid. They wanted to know how many members we have and we talked about different portfolios that report to the board. We learned that their council meets quarterly, that there are different responsibilities that different people have, such as education matters (including our scholarship assistance to students of their choosing), church building and money matters. We also learned that the minister there gets paid a small amount by the Romanian government determined by how many Unitarian members there are in the country, also by the Hungarian Unitarian Church, and by the people of Homoródújfalu.

Interaction between the children in our RE classes and those in the village came in the form of a Christmas Tree puzzle created in Homoródújfalu. UUCB children and adults alike had fun assembling the tree from the many pieces sent from Transylvania.

On July 14, 2024, the committee put on a Transylvanian embroidery and folk arts sale. Along with pieces acquired by us in previous visits, we also had a donation of many pieces by Jay Roller, a member of the Live Oak UU Congregation in Alameda, who has a long association with Partner Church activities here and in Transylvania. Thanks to Jay's generosity we raised over $500, one of the largest fundraisers ever.

Committee contacts: Stephanie Ann Blythe, chair, steph62850@yahoo.com Anne Greenwood, co-chair, annegt1@sbcglobal.net

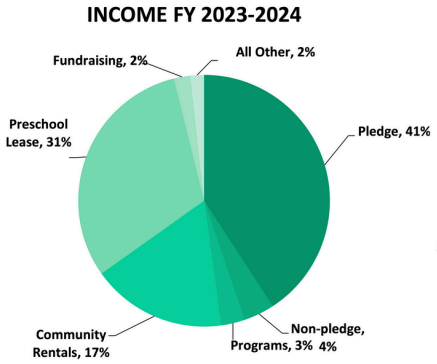
Finance Report

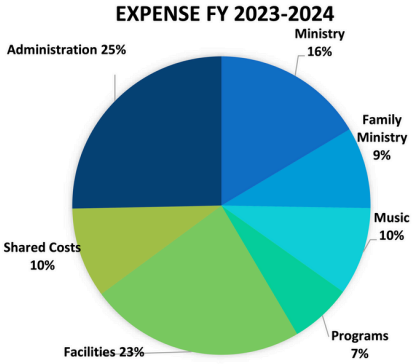
The presence and leadership of Rev. Marcus Liefert as our new settled minister generated great enthusiasm and activity in our congregation and our staff. We made efforts to improve our connections, our worship-related operations, and our staff conditions (e.g. increasing Connections Coordinator hours midyear, increasing tech support time, encouraging professional development, protecting work-life balance by engaging guest presenters for worship services). These positive developments did result in some over-budget totals in staffing-related costs (wages, taxes, benefits, consultant/contractor fees, guest musicians/ministers/artists); we paid a bit extra during the past fiscal year, in order to support our congregation's recent growth, and to promote continuing growth.

We also had high expenditures in accounting services because of needed improvements in our accounting support, and because of special projects to solve longtime problems. Insurance, phones, computers, property taxes and utilities showed expenses greater than planned; many of these discrepancies were predicted early enough to provide useful information for the development of the 2024-25 budget.

Fortunately, all these expenditures were balanced by strong revenue. The revenue chart shows that as projected, our largest sources of income are pledge payments and space rentals. We are fortunate to have a committed congregation and a campus that both provides us with a beautiful and spacious home, and generates revenue. We ended the 2023-24 fiscal year with a small operating surplus.

The accompanying expense chart shows the costs of our activities by area. The total expense exceeds revenue because we include costs supported by donor restricted funds received in previous fiscal years. In addition to the costs shown, during 2023-24 we spent almost $200,000 on capital improvements.





Income			Expense		
Pledge	449,784	41%	Ministry	194,641	16%
Non-pledge	44,007	4%	Family Ministry	104,308	9%
Programs	33,412	3%	Music	112,798	10%
Community Rentals	191,253	17%	Programs	79,367	7%
Preschool Lease	341,193	31%	Facilities	276,526	23%
Fundraising	23,232	2%	Shared Costs	115,725	10%
All Other	19,444	2%	Administration	299,531	25%
Total Income	**$ 1,102,325**	100%	**Total Expense**	**$ 1,182,895**	100%

* Not including Depreciation or Investment activity

Endowment Project Oversight Committee (EPOC)

The Endowment Project Oversight Committee was established in January 2018, when the congregation voted to withdraw up to $758,000 from the Board-Designated Endowment fund for capital needs. The role of the EPOC is to oversee the use of the endowment funds and to report to the board and congregation periodically.

Current members of the EPOC include Larry Nagel, Beth Pollard, Lenore Ralston, Jason Russell and Tom Tripp. The committee meets intermittently, as needed.

UUCB has used the money from the endowment fund, plus some member donations targeted for specific identified projects, for the following projects:

1. Renovation of the Safir Room and adjacent skylights
2. Replace Sanctuary furnace and renovate Cottage for rental.
3. Repair rotted rafter (Purlin) tail
4. Ventilation upgrades for Sanctuary, Social Hall and Fireside room, and refresh Atrium bathrooms.
5. Cost of engineering studies for HVAC & Electrical design of all electric campus.
6. Required construction of Private Sewer Lateral
7. Atrium door repairs and upgrades (currently underway)
8. Further Engineering Studies for All Electric campus (currently underway).

At this point, $725,000 has been withdrawn from the Board-Designated Endowment Fund, which preserves the corpus or principal. Of these funds, about $670,000 has been spent, and an additional $55,000 has been committed. About $180,000 has been donated by members of the congregation for specific identified endowment fund projects, to augment these funds.

The total value of work completed or committed is therefore approximately $905,000.

More detailed reports are available upon request.

$528,928

149 pledges

Stewardship

The Stewardship Team consisted of 10 members, including Reverend Marcus Liefert. After an initial meeting in December 2023, we began meeting weekly in mid-January 2024 and continued through April. During May we worked on wrap-up of the Stewardship campaign, without meetings of the full team.

Pledge goal: $450,000 was the initial goal; a stretch goal of $500,000 was added. $498,750 is the amount of pledge revenue included in the FY24-25 budget. The pledge revenue amount included in the budget was based on projected pledge income of $525,000 minus 5% for non-payment.

Pledge total as of 7/2/24 is $528,928 (149 pledges). The median pledge is $1,440.

Stewardship Team Activities

1. **Theme and Theme song**. “Wake Now Our Vision” (theme), “Wake Now My Senses” (song). Imagery related to awakening to new visions and hopes appeared in the Beacon, on the chancel, in our “pledge thermometer” display, and at our Kickoff Event.
2. **Kickoff Event**. Goals of March 3 event:
    - Generate enthusiasm by demonstrating the vibrancy of the church’s many programs.
    - Provide an opportunity for UUCB groups to connect with new participants.
    - Encourage UUCB congregants to engage with each other, learn about UUCB group participation opportunities, and learn more about Stewardship.
    - Provide incentives to encourage early pledging by creating a festive atmosphere, offering dessert at the Stewardship Table and announcing a raffle for those who pledge by Celebration Sunday.
3. **Outreach to Congregation**.
    - Beacon articles, January through May; Sunday Service announcements; Week Ahead announcements; gold banner announcements on website.
    - Staffed atrium pledge table (pledge forms, chocolate and the “pledge thermometer”) on March Sundays.
    - Pledge email to all members (information about stewardship theme, purpose of pledging, how to pledge). Pledge letter/form mailed to member households.
4. **Youth/RE Participation**. Coordinated with RE to create stewardship-related project combining reflection and artwork. Children/youth explored ideas of stewardship as “taking care of our place” and “taking care of our people.” Assembly of Blessings Bags (Social Justice Sponsored project) coordinated with stewardship campaign.
    - Youth and Children’s Choir presented songs designed to “awaken” and energize the congregation during two Sunday services. A youth voice was included in one of the March Stewardship Reflections.
5. **Congregant Stewardship Reflections** during Sunday Services in March. On each of the first four Sundays in March, a different member of the UUCB community spoke during the service about what UUCB means to them.
6. **Celebration Sunday. March 24**: total dollar amount of pledges received shared with congregation during announcements at end of Sunday service. Cake, raffle winners announced after service.

Social Justice Council

The Social Justice Council (SJC) identifies projects and actions that offer opportunities to the congregation to engage in building a more just world. We share information about these opportunities at the Social Justice Table in the atrium on Sundays and during special events. The work of the SJC includes approving and supporting Sponsored Projects, identifying recipients for the Good Neighbor program, and sponsoring Actions of Immediate Witness. During the 2023-24 church year, the SJC met every second Wednesday on Zoom and once in person (September, 2023). This report summarizes the work of SJC's Sponsored Projects during the 2023-2024 church year.

Social Justice Sunday

Sunday, October 22, 2023 was quite a day for celebration at UUCB! From ten in the morning till two in the afternoon, our Social Justice Council sponsored a gala highlighting 15 of the programs that it supports. We heard great preaching, ate a yummy lunch, played games, danced, sang and visited tables where sponsors of all 15 programs described their work and invited members and friends to join them. Dozens of our members gave their hearts and their time to plan and carry out this exhilarating and uplifting day.



Blessing Bags

Blessings Bags contain essential items such as water, snacks, sox, and toiletries that are distributed to those unhoused.

The youth of UUCB have been very engaged in assembling the bags organizing the last ASSEMBLE. We gave them Youth Ambassadors of Social Justice badges for their engagement in the project. We partnered with one of UUCB's Good Neighbors, SOS (Safe Organized Spaces) who visit encampments and provide mobile showers. We've also given some Blessings Bags to Albany Thrives Together.

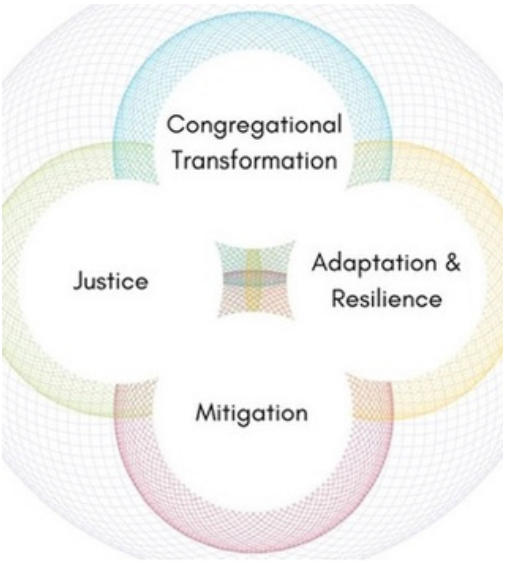


We are mindful of environmental impacts. Judy Sam informed us about CLEANOMIC compostable bags, and the Rosales Family gave us with water in aluminum containers that can be recycled.

This year we distributed a total of 150 bags. We could not have done this without receiving donations of toiletries, snacks and sox from our UUCB people!

Climate Justice Committee

The CJC currently has 13 active members who regularly attend and participate in organizing our events. The CJC supports UUCB's recycling and plant-based cooking efforts and use of the Climate Action Now app and informs the congregation on climate issues and actions to take, for example on Social Justice Sunday and through the listserv.



This year we completed the Congregational Profile for application to the UUA's Green Sanctuary (GS) program. It was reviewed by members of the CJC, the SJC, Rev. Marcus, and Board members. We submitted the document to the GS program and it was accepted with enthusiasm.

Thereafter, we began to work on the GS Opportunity Assessment. When the UUA announced a national Climate Justice Revival for the last weekend in September 2024, we shifted our focus to the Revival since participation will move us forward on the GS process and provide input from the congregation to inform an action plan.

The CJC worked with Voting Justice to complete and send postcards to environmental voters. For Earth Day, we screened The Letter, featuring Pope Francis and people from around the world displaced by climate change. About 25 people, mostly from the congregation, attended. CJC member Phil Maynard led nature walks around the UUCB property focused on area birds and native plants. Finally, we helped organize a concert and multimedia event in July by Jim Scott.

Confronting Racism & Oppression

Confronting Racism and Oppression is a sponsored project of the Social Justice Council comprised of several ongoing committees that meet regularly and undertake actions to further its mission.

Social Justice Council

POCC



The UUCB People of Color Caucus (POCC) provides a safe space for racial and ethnic minority members to support each other's spiritual journeys. We share and provide educational experiences to our church community and are active allies and partners to our wider community in opposing and dismantling racism and all forms of oppression.

The POCC met monthly and added 3 new members.

Actions and Activities:

- reading and vibrant discussions of socially significant and relevant articles
- 8-session Chalice Circle focusing on culture and identity started 10/23
- presentation to WOWS on "Positive White Anti-Racism," a GA workshop, 10/23
- engagement with UUA's DRUUMM (Diverse Religious Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries
- Retreat, focusing on ancestors, resilience and joy 2/24.
- Members attendance @ DRUUMM retreat @ Oakland UU church, 5/24
- Black History Month Service and Celebration, "The Music of our Resilience and Resistance," 2/24
- LFDMC discussion of film "American Fiction 5/24
- "Roads and Roles of Comedy" play by Harold, playwright, actor and director, a fundraiser for UUCB Music and Arts, 6/24

WOWS

WOWS (Working to Overcome White Supremacy) hosted a number of presentations in 2022-2023, such as talks on racism in housing; Nicole Hannah-Jones's docuseries, The 1619 Project; the work of Speak at Albany High School; microaggressions; and "American Democracy without White Supremacy: Real, Aspirational or Hype?" They also continued to share Moments of Awareness of Unconscious Bias (MAUBs) and Moments of Illumination (MOIs).

Social Justice Council

Summer Forum

The Social Justice Council sponsors forums on social justice topics during the summer months. Dorothy Herzberg, who has run this project, will be retiring from this work at the end of this summer. Presentations for summer 2024:

- June 9 Sally McLaughlin, Berkeley Schools Volunteer Manager
- June 23 Rev. Cathleen Cox, "The Power of a Meaning Centered Life"
- June 30 World Peace Committee Film Presentation, "Time to Abolish War"
- July 14 Sally Hindman, “Spirituality in Action: The Richmond Tiny House Village”
- August 18 Charlie Clason, Internship Capstone

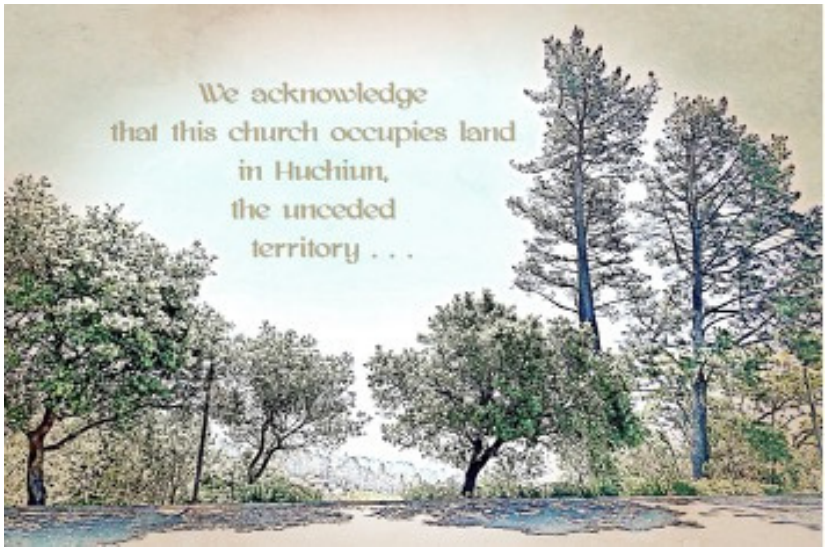
Voting Justice

Voting Justice began in 4/23 and works with non-partisan groups to support youth and voters of color who often face impediments to voting. Voting Justice members prepare packets that include postcards, scripts, addresses and voting information for UUCB congregants to complete and return for certification and mailing. The project sent 300 postcards to Nevada and 200 postcards to Florida, working with The Environmental Voter Project and has engaged the congregation in writing over 1500 postcards to Arizona, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia, through the Center for Common Ground/Reclaim Our Vote. Enthusiasm and engagement in this project continues unabated as we approach 2000 voters contacted by concerned congregants. Voting Justice also informs the Discuss and Social Justice listservs of opportunities to participate that do not involve handwriting, working to be inclusive of all participants regardless of physical dexterity.



Social Justice Council

Honoring Indigenous Peoples Group



With respect and humility, UUCB's Honoring Indigenous Peoples Group (HIP) is committed to do our part to restore what has been broken and to live in solidarity with Indigenous communities and the earth. Integral to our work is honoring and partnering with Indigenous communities and engaging in reparative actions.

The HIP group met at least once/month and is composed of 12 members (2 new members this year.

Actions/activities:

- Three Sisters Garden–
  - In 2023, in consultation with and support from Buildings and Grounds, involvement of RE kids and assistance from Jim Acock and Sheldon Jones, constructed, planted and tended the garden.
  - Fall Garden Celebration, blessing and service with Rev. Marcus and Ohlone/Chumash member Kanyon CoyoteWoman Sayers Roods, Indian Canyon Tribal Nation
  - In 2024, replanted garden, Spring Garden Blessing with Rev. Marcus
- Donation to and attendance at GoodGuest Kensington's Waterways workshop,
- 10/23. GGK are advocates for the local Ohlone community.
- SJC Sunday participants, 11/23
- LFDMC presentation, 11/23, "Potlatch–Giveaway: Indigenous Stories, Poems and
- Songs"
- Via discuss list, sent out information re: history and celebration of Thanksgiving
- in the context of settler colonialism, 11/23
- Attended/supported local indigenous play Manahatta and restaurant Wahpepah's
- Kitchen
- Arranged donation of surplus UUCB AV equipment to Indian Tribal Nation, 6/24
- Consulted on use of Freestone and on sweat lodge request
- Curated HIP blog

In addition to these Sponsored Projects, projects affiliated with the Social Justice Council include LFDMC, Standing with Unhoused, and the World Peace Committee.

World Peace Committee

The UUCB World Peace Committee has been reactivated during the last church year and is open to all interested members and friends. Monthly meetings occur on zoom the fourth Tuesday of each month.

This year we have been very distressed by the Israeli/Hamas war and have circulated petitions calling for a ceasefire and the cessation of US provision of offensive arms to the Israeli military. The committee made a $2000 donation to the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund. In June, we hosted a Summer Forum program featuring a documentary film on the 1999 Le Hague Peace Conference that member Dorothy Herzberg had attended. In the coming year, we plan to conduct educational programs about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and draw attention to the need to phase out ICBM's as a first step in reducing the danger of an accidental nuclear war.

Good Neighbor

July 2nd - Bay Area Outreach And Recreation Program (BORP) $2202.27
August 6th - No More Tears $2200.84
September 3rd - East Bay Center for the Blind $1953.42
October 1st - Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP) $2405.27
November 5th - Nurturing Independence through Artistic Development (NIAD) $1866.42
December 3rd- Safe Return Program $2015.27
January 7th - Berkeley Food Pantry $1931.27
February 4th - SOS Safe Organized Spaces - $2092.27
March 3rd - Pogo Park - $2248.57
April 7th - Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program - $1528.42
May 5th - YES Nature to Neighborhoods $1505.30
June 2nd - Richmond Emergency Food Pantry $1990.17

TOTAL: $23,939.49

Adult Education & Exploration

Applied UU Buddhist Sangha

This past year we met every Tuesday for two hours on Zoom. We meditated for fifteen minutes, shared about the relevance to our lives of Buddhist readings and ended with Metta affirmations. We currently have eight members who have benefited from these experiences which affirm the values of Beloved Community. Leader Lynnette Delgado.

Textiles and Art Group

Textiles And Art Group was formed at the end of the church year 2023 with much support from UUCB congregants who enjoy creative endeavors, engaging in designing and making textiles and art. We presently meet twice a month, pursuing individual and group projects with encouragement, laughter and sharing of ideas. Leader Karen Tripp.

Wednesday Walk and Talk

The Wednesday Walk and Talk group is open to all, has been walking on Wednesday mornings for more than ten years. Attendance ranges from two to six or more people. Leader Ann Harlow.

Women's Book Group

We have come to know each other deeply through our discussion of books and the relationships between the world, history, and our own lives. The love and trust we have developed over time allow us to explore difficult topics such as social issues, human-caused destruction, and our mortality. We draw comfort and hope from addressing these topics together. Three recent books are: Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver, The Lemon Tree by Sandy Tolan, and Killers of the Flower Moon by David Grann.
Leaders Lisa Maynard and Karen Tripp.

Women's Meditation Group

In 2023-24 the Women's Insight Meditation continued to meet weekly and offered both in-person and virtual environments to practice "insight" and "loving kindness meditations. Leader Evelie Delfino Såles Posch.

Write For Your Life

Write For Your Life, a creation of Beth Glick-Rieman and continued by Kit Hewitt, continues to Zoom every Monday to write meditatively on life, the universe and anything else that is on our minds. Leader Kit Hewitt.

Humanist Connections

Example recent topics: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Universities; Rev. Marcus Liefert, "My Theology and Beliefs about God; Mediation and Conflict Resolution and "Gaslighting"

The Humanist Connections has been meeting weekly on Zoom throughout the duration of the COVID pandemic period and continued once the pandemic period ended. They found that many members were able to attend on Zoom. However, once a month, on 3rd Sundays, an in-person Humanist Connections is at UUCB. The in-person monthly and Zoom on other Sundays is an ideal combination to engage in the powerful topics presented each month.

During 2024, the chair of the Humanist changed from Marcia Bates to Ray Westergard, Harold Ogden and Don Anderson. The Humanist continue to discuss ethical, social, political, religious, artistic, and scientific matters each week. Theses once-a-week discussions of short topics engage with every aspect of human life.

Once a month they select the long (full session) topics for the succeeding month. People propose possible topics, to be presented by the person proposing the topic. After coming up with six to eight topics, we then vote for the ones we like, and the winners are scheduled for each of the weeks in the following month.

Meetings involve one or two people presenting each topic and taking 10 to 15 minutes. Then the remainder of each session is devoted to discussion among the group.

There are about 40 people on the email list, with 10 to 15 attending each Sunday on Zoom. Humanist Connections has been a lifeline for many of us, lighting up the many lockdown days during COVID and its aftermath.

Personal Theology

The Personal Theology seminars continued in the ZOOM format throughout 2022 but in 2023 and 2024 we were able to give speakers the choice of speaking in-person with a stream to Zoom or just present on Zoom.

Chair of Personal Theology, Anne Wardell, and Zoom Support person, Lonnie Moseley, successfully provided 18 planned programs. Several speakers were members of UUCB who kindly donated their time and thoughts on a variety of subjects. The seminars provided by our members were deeply moving and indicated yet again what a rich and talented group of members that UUCB is fortunate to have.

Attendance at these sessions ranged from 22-91, with a usual attendance of approximately 40. It was discovered that the electronic format allowed attendance from as far away as Wales, England, Ecuador, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Tennessee, New Mexico, Louisiana, Washington, and various parts of California. We were able to do all of these programs and still come in under budget due to the generosity of many of our nationally known speakers.

We were able to host Dr. Karen Voorhees, Timothy Travis, Rev. Carolyn West, Rev. Zae Asa Illio, Kevin Fisher Paulson, Kanyon Sayers-Rood, Anne Greenwood and Rev. Jay Atkinson, Mursid Kiran Rana, Jim Gasperini, Rev. Marcus Liefert, Rev. Aija Simpson, Joanna Winston-Foley, Harold James Dean, Josh Kornbluth, Tess Snook O'Riva, Heaven Walker, Dr. Victoria Lee, Dr. David Belden The range of speakers and topics has been wide, and positive feedback has been received.

An unexpected and wonderful speaker, who recently died, was Kevin Paulson, SF Chronicle Columnist on October 29, 2023. He filled the Fireside Room to overflowing and the Zoom Room.

At the present time, multiple programs are confirmed for Fall semester 2024, using both the Zoom streaming and in-person format. Continuation of using Zoom allows the Personal Theology programs to host speakers who live out of the area and/or prefer not to be in a large group setting for health reasons.

It is anticipated the Personal Theology program will continue with twice monthly presentations for the foreseeable future. As always, the committee could use more members, specifically those with Zoom computer skills.

Lawrence Lecture

The Lawrence Lecture Series, established in 1977, aims to provide a public forum for inquiry into the nature and relevancy of religion (institutionally, philosophically, or as an ethical force) in a world of accelerating technological and social change, and conflicting social values. Additionally, this event is designed to attract favorable public attention to a liberal religious presence in the community.

The 2023 Lawrence Lecture speaker was Spiritual Theologian, Rev. Matthew Fox, who spoke on “Towards a New Mythology: New & Ancient Names for God derived from Mystical Ancestors and Contemporary Science (& Fit for Some Atheists, Too),”

Rev. Marcus Liefert hosted the discussion and led the Q&A after Rev. Fox’ remarks. The energy in the room was palpable as Rev. Fox called for the pews to be put in a circle and people to dance at church services. There was laughter, connection, joy and wonder as Rev. Fox engaged with all of us in a NEW MYTHOLOGY.

Chair and Treasurer, Katie Lipka; Secretary, David Rosales; members, Jim Acock, Christina Creveling and (formerly) Jack Duggan; Melissa James (UUA Pacific Western Region) and Rev. Marcus Leifert, UUCB are included as titular members.

Landscape Team

from Phil Maynard

I am the Co-Chair of Landscape Team with Carol Carlisle. Carol's focus is on the nice Landscaping around the Church (ie..terrace) and mine is the more wild and native plants of the 9 acre UUCB campus. The Landscape Team has monthly zoom call meetings, and work parties at UUCB (normally 3rd Saturday of the month). We are always looking for new members for the committee and the work parties. Please reach out to me if you are interested or have good Landscape ideas.



This year we continued working on maintaining the landscape with weeding, watering and pruning. The remaining Monterey pine trees are a safety and fire hazard so they got some special attention by a professional arborist. The arborist pruning was effective and we did not have any trees fall this year. We did buy and plant 10 large (15 gallon) trees, which were mostly native Coast Live Oak, and Buckeye, but also the Western Red Bud tree that was used in Marcus' installation (that included specially blessed compost). All the new trees seem to be doing well.

Fire hazard abatement is always a concern for the Church campus; this year there was another bad year of weed and thistle growth that was weed whipped and mowed by some special volunteers. The fire department seems to be satisfied.

For Earth Day we sponsored a bird and plant identification walk, and showed off the Great Horned Owl nest with mother and 2 Owlets, a highlight for all (3rd year in a row).

Our present interest is to make a "pollinator garden" in the north parking lot strip. We have weeded the stip and were given 12 native plants that have been planted. But there is room for more good pollinator plants.

Below is a photo taken at the end of a work party, we are tired and sweaty but still smiling. And the red bud behind us is happy too. We need to landscape this area off the terrace. Again, come join us celebrate and take care of the church grounds.

Buildings & Grounds

The Building and Grounds committee meets monthly and is responsible to support the Executive Director, the Facilities Manager, and the Board of Trustees in prioritizing, analyzing and implementing projects for the buildings and the grounds on the main campus and other sites to support the mission of the church in providing safe, welcoming, functional, and aesthetically pleasing spaces.

During the 23-24 fiscal year, we worked on the following major projects and many smaller ones:

- Updated the long-range facilities plan, documenting facility needs totaling about $2,000,000.
- Sponsored numerous volunteer work parties, accomplishing landscape upgrades and miscellaneous building beatification tasks.
- Continue to study and refine plans for HVAC and Electrical upgrades to update our building systems and support the vision to convert to an all-electric campus.
- Completed the 1,000 private sewer lateral replacement required by EBMUD as a condition of the 2015 Safir Room building permit.
- Sound system upgrades for the Sanctuary. Sound consultant was hired, new speakers have been purchased and installation is scheduled for this fall.
- Restriped the parking lots for more safe and efficient parking.
- Replaced the Atrium fountain pump and professionally cleaned and inspected the Fireside Room fireplace.
- Awarded a construction contract for Atrium door upgrades. This includes repairing the 6-panel tri-fold doors around the Atrium with new hardware and upgrading the hardware on the Sanctuary door to be an emergency exit.
- Repaired and upgraded all kitchen ovens and replaced the thermocouples.
- Built new rigging system in the Social Hall to hoist center-based decorations, like the beautiful holiday lights illuminating the Solstice Labyrinth.
- Installed new floor tiles around the dishwasher, including professional removal of asbestos tiles.
- Mounted 4 rigging points on the Chancel wall for enhanced decorations and created a system to hang the 75-foot long fabric rainbow along the Sanctuary ceiling in time for Rev. Marcus' installation.
- Completely demolished and replaced the unsafe fence and gate to the nursery play area.
- Replaced all sink traps in the schools and replaced faucets and fixtures as needed.
- Replaced the water heater and faulty gas control valve in the two-story school.
- Upgraded the school room lights and those in the Atrium with LED fixtures.
- Held our first Unplugged Week, wherein offices were repainted and the coat closet, Program Storage, and Facilities Workshop were cleaned out and reorganized.
- Repaired leaks in the roof over both the Atrium and the Sanctuary.
- Continued to remove at-risk and fallen trees under the UUA Disaster Grant, as well as removing dirt from the falling hill that had obstructed many parking spaces.
- Planted numerous native plants and trees to replace the removed trees.

The committee continues to work to maintain our buildings and grounds, and welcomes any member interested in joining the committee.

All Electric Task Force

All Electric Task Force:
The board has endorsed the vision to create an “All Electric” campus, in support of our mission to support climate justice by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

The All-Electric Task Force has been established to further this vision and locate sources of government, utility company and other funding, and support the Building and Grounds committee in the overall effort. Current members of the task force include Abbot Foote, Paul Hudson, Larry Nagel, Sheila Tarbet, Tom Tripp and Lucinda Young. The committee meets intermittently, as needed.

The scope of this endeavor would include replacing the 20 gas fired furnaces on campus with electric HVAC systems, most likely heat pumps, and replacing the gas fired equipment in the kitchen with electric. The plan would include EV chargers and perhaps battery backup and/or battery load management. Geothermal is also under investigation.

The task force has met several times and has researched the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), attended UUA seminars and a UUA Peer Learning Circle about the IRA. We have attended US Green Building Council (USGBC) seminars and researched other sources of funding. The IRA, first thought to be a source of funding, is intended for tax credits, with some limited availability for direct pay for non-profit organizations, which, however, excludes heat pumps.

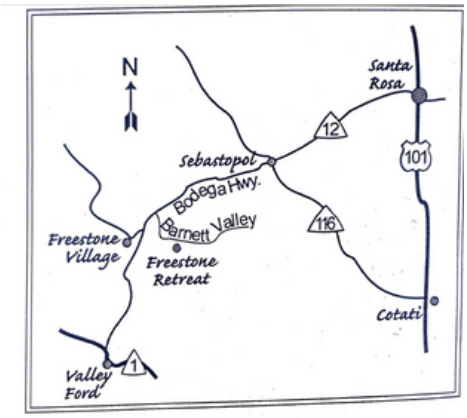
Potential funding for this effort include:

- IRA funding
- Other federal, state and local government grants
- Private foundation grants
- UUCB Capital Campaign
- Targeted member donations

The committee continues to study options for funding and is hopeful that more government funding may be available in the near future.

Freestone

The Freestone Committee spent the last year working hard to move forward with meeting our first resolution milestone of raising $250,000, for retreat rehabilitation, by December 1st, 2024. One of the most promising potential funding avenues was procurement of a conservation easement. Unfortunately this did not pan out and the one easement we applied for, protection of agricultural land (our property is zoned agricultural/residential) was denied.



In February of this year we moved forward with listing for sale our two raw land lots that are adjacent to the retreat property, for $300,000. Interest from potential buyers was excellent and we entered into a sale contract with a potential buyer. However after some due diligence by the buyer, they pulled out, due to concerns about the lack of proven water on the two lots, for well development. The Committee then decided that we would locate water, drill a well, in order to facilitate a sale at a price to meet our needs and funding goal.

In pursuit of finding water we have engaged a local geologist to perform subsurface groundwater surveys at six locations to assess groundwater flow potential. Based on those results a 200' well was drilled but came up dry. We now are performing two more groundwater surveys and based on those results plan to drill one more well. This work should be complete by mid October.

Other funding pursuits that could meet our funding needs include looking for private and public money grants. We also have had a couple of fundraisers at the church - Dinner and Movie Night and Art Sale, and plan another in October with music, story telling and poetry reading.

The Committee applied for and received from the County a Vacation Rental Permit. This is required for rental of the retreat house to the public (Air BnB...) or even to ourselves. Although we have not rented the house out to the public in the past, this permit will afford us this option moving forward. This could be a way of paying for annual maintenance costs. The County also requires an annual rental license which we are currently in the process of obtaining.

The retreat house itself is doing well and survived an aggressive winter thanks to winterizing repairs made in Summer 2023. The house remains closed to daytime or overnight use until further repairs are made.

Freestone Oversight Committee

The Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) was established when the congregation adopted the March 2023 resolution (https://uucb.org/?s=Freestone+Resolution) outlining the process, conditions and milestones for making UUCB's Freestone retreat property safe and financially sustainable. FOC's purpose is to oversee and report to the Board and congregation about the progress of the Freestone Committee in accomplishing the fundraising and renovation work needed to retain Freestone as provided in the resolution.
The FOC was also tasked with administering a $11,500 Contingency Loan Fund for initial work - including successfully securing a Vacation Rental Permit and a Transient Occupancy Tax License, as well as obtaining engineering advice, mapping/surveying, and groundwater testing.

The Board-appointed six FOC members are: Beth Pollard (Board Rep), David Wemmer (Freestone Committee Rep), Alan Davis (Freestone Committee Rep), Tom Tripp, Susan Lankford, and Larry Nagel. In August 2024, Bob Moore replaced Alan Davis.
The FOC's initial work included reviewing recommendations from a structural engineer about the Dome building, and a civil engineer and fire professionals about road improvements for improved fire safety/egress.
For fundraising, the Freestone Committee applied for a conservation easement for a portion of Freestone property – aiming to be awarded Federal grant funds in exchange for preserving land from development; the FOC monitored this process, which was eventually unsuccessful.

The FOC agreed with the Freestone Committee's recommendation to list vacant parcels 1 and 2 for sale at $300,000, which was approved by the Board of Trustees in January 2024. After the lots went on the market via Coldwell Banker, offers were received and pursued. However, the prospective buyers raised concerns about obtaining well water on the lots.
With FOC approval, the Freestone Committee spent the remaining Contingency Loan Funds to perform a groundwater survey. However, the survey's results were discouraging, showing minimal water flow potential, leading the buyer to back out.
With funds from an "angel" donor, the Freestone Committee continues to perform subsurface water surveys and well drilling; the first drill did not find water and at least one more well drilling is planned.

Other Freestone Committee fundraising has included an art sale and dinners, all within the FOC fundraising guidelines to not interfere with general UUCB fundraising. A primary focus now for the FOC and Freestone Committee is whether the congregation resolution requirement for raising $250,000 by December 1, 2024 will be met.
Monthly updates about FOC/Freestone can be found in the Beacon and in Board of Trustees agendas.

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