



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale

October 2023

Fellowship News & Events



Join us on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in person or on Zoom at <https://bit.ly/uufs-sunday-service>. All of our children join us in the sanctuary on the last Sunday of each month and then go from there with their teachers to their classrooms.

### *Sunday Services*

#### **Leaning Into Your Faith**

October 1 @ 9:30 –10:30 a.m.

By Rev. John Bloom-Ramirez

Tons of articles online give advice about living your faith from a Christian perspective, but how do we do that as UUs? Faith and the idea of it can make a lot of us uncomfortable, so why not just lean into it?

#### **Children and Youth Sunday Morning Program**

In recognition of LGBTQ+ history month, participants will reflect on how the gender binary is a human construct by learning about and creating their own nonbinary chimera butterflies.

Youth in middle or high school will be visiting a nearby church as part of their current [Crossing Paths](#) session on Christian Evangelicalism. Email [redirector@uufs.org](mailto:redirector@uufs.org) for further information.

#### **Creatively Engaging our UU “Living Tradition”**

October 8 @ 9:30 –10:30 a.m.

By UUFS Members Tara Martin-Milius and Mary Ellen Bercik

Unitarian Universalists live out their Principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality drawn from diverse sources of cultural and religious traditions, poetry, science, sacred texts, and personal experience. At this service, we’ll actively respond to short musical pieces reflecting three sources of UU wisdom. Using words,

drawings, and movement we’ll share thoughts, feelings and movements the music evokes.

#### **Costumes and Masks**

October 15 @ 9:30 –10:30 a.m.

By Rev. John Bloom-Ramirez

We all wear costumes in our daily lives – a lab coat, a uniform, a three-piece suit, etc. With those costumes, we wear a mask that matches the occasion. What happens if the mask and costume don’t match, or, if we wear them so much, that becomes our identity?

#### **Cultivating Joy in a Turbulent World**

October 22 @ 9:30 –10:30 a.m.

By UUFS Member Matt Peters

Do you sometimes find it hard to be joyful with so much pain, suffering and division in our world? Is it even right to be joyful in times like these? Matt Peters will share a few practical insights he took away from an interfaith conversation on this topic.

#### **Sharing the Journey: A Report from the Crossing Paths Religious Literacy Group for Youth**

October 29 @ 9:30 –10:30 a.m.

By Alexander Menter and Joseph Healy

Youth congregants Alexander Menter and Joseph Healy share what they learned on a visit to the Sunnyvale site of Echo Church. They are learning about Christian Evangelical “megachurches” as part of their first session of [Crossing Paths](#), a UU course in interfaith engagement.

## *Special Service*

### **Samhain Circle and Celebration**

When: Sunday, October 29, 6:15 – 7:45 p.m.

By Rev. John Bloom-Ramirez

Join us in person in the Sanctuary (and labyrinth) this evening for a special Samhain celebration honoring the Celtic New Year, the end of summer and the end of the harvest season, and the day where "the veil is at its thinnest."

### ***Minister's Musings from Rev. John Bloom-Ramirez***

Autumn is my favorite time of year. Not just because September happens to be my birthday month, but it is delightfully fraught with the promises of new beginnings and the start of new projects. As a former agricultural society, we operate off the times of harvest – children wouldn't return to school traditionally until after the harvest was completed. It's why the school year traditionally begins in September: with a pause in the winter months for reflection and family, and a pause in the springtime for planting. For me, it is an auspicious time of the year for new beginnings. Samhain starts the Celtic new year, and just like the traditional Gregorian New Year on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, it's favorable to set goals for oneself.

One of the spiritual practices I do for myself is I draw a single Tarot card every day, and I reflect on the meaning of the card and what it might mean for me. When I first applied to be your contract minister I drew the V Tradition card, represented by the Goddess Juno/Hera (in standard decks this would be the Hierophant). I interpreted this as a desire to return to traditional ministry, and a strong need to connect with a group on a more spiritual basis. Being the Goddess of Marriage, Hera also represents making and keeping vows, like contracts. Days later, I was signing the contract with your community.

Recently, I drew the 0 Beginnings Card, represented by the Buddhist Bodhisattva Tara (in standard decks the Hanged Man). A perfect card for a new beginning, this card invites us to not only step out onto a new path, but to step out in faith, knowing that while the path isn't clear, the next step will reveal itself in time. We must have the courage to embrace the messiness of the future and embark on the journey with no fear, with trust, and with optimism. Upon further reflection, my desire is to start completely fresh with this new community that I am serving, with open eyes and heart, with the knowledge that we as a community will be liberated from what doesn't serve us, and we are together and not alone during this time of transition.

The past is the past, and we can learn from it as a guide on what works and what didn't. My strongest wish in the coming church year and beyond is that we continue to strengthen the lay leadership in our fellowship. We will continue to nurture our leadership teams and encourage others to lead in the future. With a strong leadership base and with me as a supportive and undergirding player, my hope is that we will be seen as a powerful place where all are welcome and supported. A strong, cohesive community shines brightly, and that will be a great draw to new members and families, and it will continue to enlighten and embrace those already part of the fellowship. May it be so.

Rev. Johnnie's available hours can be found on his Calendly booking page, <https://calendly.com/john-bloom-ramirez>. Please refer to that for any pastoral care or operational needs. If the date does not have hours listed, please reach out to [revjohnnie@uufs.org](mailto:revjohnnie@uufs.org). He is, of course, always available for immediate spiritual emergencies via his cell phone.

## ***Letter from Debbie Timmers, President, UUFS Board of Trustees***

### **What a talented fellowship!**

Since becoming lay-led last June, you all have worked hard to make our services special each week. In fact, you have gone above and beyond! Our services have been creative, heartfelt, and rich, with great sermons, wonderful music, and a variety of participation. But most of all, we have loved hearing your stories and learning from each other.

Please know that we will continue to share the ministry in our Sunday services, as Rev. Johnnie is part-time and believes in sharing the pulpit.

If you would like to present a Sunday Service or know someone who would, please reach out to Mary Ellen Bercik or the Service Coordinators by email at: [service.coordinator@uufs.org](mailto:service.coordinator@uufs.org).

### ***Children's Religious Education: October Update from Colleen Hamilton***

The theme in the Sunday morning children's program in October will be *roots*—where we come from as individuals, as members of different communities, as Unitarian Universalists, and as occupants of this land.

First, in recognition of LGBTQ+ history month, participants will reflect on how the gender binary is a human construct by learning about nonbinary chimera butterflies. Later in the month, participants will play games from indigenous traditions as well as trying out games their own parents and grandparents played. Among the holidays toward the end of October, participants will pick up a thread leading to one of Unitarian Universalism's sources—paganism—and observe Samhain, an ancient Celtic celebration of the longer periods of darkness in this part of the year.

Of course, we won't skip any of the other treats that late October is known for. The children will

wear their costumes and go door to door in the classroom area to get theirs!

The middle schoolers and high schoolers will go on their first visit to a neighboring faith as part of their current [Crossing Paths](#) session. The whole congregation can look forward to hearing their report on the visit in the service on October 29.

From actual roots in the garden to family and cultural heritages, knowing about our sources will ground us throughout the year.

### ***Opportunities for Involvement in Our Fellowship***

**Social Justice and Climate Action Team:** Do you want to feel great knowing you can make a difference? Our team members have taken actions to support groups including the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, the Sunnyvale HomeFirst shelter, Get-out-the-Vote letter-writing, the UU Service Committee, as well as other groups. We engage our congregation about climate-related issues by inviting speakers, streaming films and hosting vegan potlucks.

We are expanding our team, and we welcome new members. The commitment? Show up for our monthly Zoom meetings on the third Thursday of the month. Beyond that, you have the freedom to choose any actions you find meaningful, and the team can support you in moving forward. Contact [social.justice@uufs.org](mailto:social.justice@uufs.org) for more information.

### ***Activities***

#### **Intercongregational All-Ages Game Night**

Saturday, October 7th @ 5:00 – 7:00 pm

At UU Fellowship of Sunnyvale

There will be a variety of teen and adult table games on hand—or bring one of your own. There will also be a staff-supervised table featuring games for younger children. Parents can play knowing that their kids are happily occupied too. Enjoy good company and potluck snacks while we play.

### Multigenerational Climate Discussion Circle

Saturday, October 21st @ 11:30 –12:30 Online via Zoom

This fall, we are reading: [\*Bicycling with Butterflies: My 10,201-mile Journey Following the Monarch Migration\*](#) by Sara Dykman, the first person to bicycle alongside monarch butterflies on their storied annual migration. On the third Saturday this month, we'll continue the discussion. Books Inc in Campbell offers our intercongregational group a 20% discount. Email [redirector@uufs.org](mailto:redirector@uufs.org) if you would like to reserve a copy. It's also available from bookshop.org [here](#).

### Social Justice & Climate Action Meeting

Thursday, October 19th @ 7:15 – 8:15pm Online via Zoom

Be sure not to miss our meeting this month. You can have a say in how we distribute our non-religious funds, as we discuss and then vote on a slate of donations to local nonprofits. Join us via Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/96254752500> Questions? Email [social.justice@uufs.org](mailto:social.justice@uufs.org).

### The Book Group

Thursday, October 26th @ 1:30 - 3:30 pm  
October's book is [\*The Thursday Murder Club\*](#) by Richard Osman (available at [Leigh's Favorite Books](#) and [bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org)). Our November meeting is the third Thursday of the month and is focused on poetry. We do not meet in December.

We meet in a member's home with a Zoom option *by request*. Contact [book.group@uufs.org](mailto:book.group@uufs.org) to join us or to be added to our Google Group.

### Men's Group

Meets weekly on Tuesday @ 7:15 - 8:15 p.m.  
Online via Zoom  
Contact: [choir@uufs.org](mailto:choir@uufs.org)

### Meditation Group

Meets weekly on Thursday @ 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.  
Online via Zoom  
Contact: [meditation@uufs.org](mailto:meditation@uufs.org)

### Women's Group

Meets every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month @ 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
Online via Zoom  
Contact: [womens.group@uufs.org](mailto:womens.group@uufs.org)

### Contact Us

You can reach our office manager, Ellen Juco, at [office@uufs.org](mailto:office@uufs.org) or by calling our office at (408) 739-0549. Ellen is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30 - 7:00 p.m. and on Sunday mornings. (On site Tuesdays and Sundays, and from home on Thursdays.)

Reverend Johnnie's meeting hours are available on his Calendly booking page [here](#). Please refer to that for any pastoral care or operational needs. If the date does not have hours listed, please reach out at [revjohnnie@uufs.org](mailto:revjohnnie@uufs.org). He is, of course, always available for immediate spiritual emergencies via his cell phone.

Please direct questions about this newsletter to our Communications Team at [communications@uufs.org](mailto:communications@uufs.org).

[Our Fellowship is Located on Ohlone Land.](#)

*Note:* See our [News](#) page for detailed information on our Covid-19 decision making and policies.

### Monthly Calendar

[uufs.org/calendar/](http://uufs.org/calendar/)

