



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale

January 2025

Fellowship News & Events



Join us on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in person or on Zoom at bit.ly/uufs-sunday-service. All 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.

Writing Our Own Ending

January 5 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Rev. John Bloom-Ramirez

Brene Brown tells us, "When we have the courage to walk into our story and own it, we get to write the ending. And when we don't own our stories of failure, setbacks, and hurt—they own us." How do we control the narrative and write our own "endings"?

Children's Sunday Morning Community, 9:15-11:30 a.m.

New year, new story: we will kick off January's theme by making and decorating notebooks. We'll also play some games having to do with who we are and what we want to become.

The Ethical Foundations of the Christian Bible

January 12 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Member Samuel Knapp

Samuel Knapp will offer his perspectives on important and relevant ethical insights that can be derived from the teachings of Jesus as found in the Christian Bible

The Truth of Fairytales

January 19 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Rev. John Bloom-Ramirez

As children we are told various fairy tales, some cautionary, some scary, but almost all of them have a happily ever after. What if I told you fairy tales are true?

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

January 26 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Member Debbie Timmers

As theologian Paul Tillich writes, "the first duty of love is to listen." However, as humans, we often listen using a filter that reinforces our biases. How can we get past our preconceived notions and build better relationships?



Minister's Musings

This holiday season suddenly took a rough turn for me, personally. I am grieving in a strange way: my stepfather, whom I have little respect for and do not have a relationship with for multitudes of reasons, is dying. To put a not too fine a point on it, he was abusive and hurtful, while simultaneously being absent most of my formative years. Sure, he resided in the same house as us, but he largely kept to himself, tinkering with whatever in his motorhome parked in our driveway. I rarely saw him, except in the evenings when he'd come in for dinner (that I typically cooked) and when we had company.

How do you grieve someone like this?

You also must realize that others might have a different relationship with said individual, as is the case with my two brothers who adore their father. That's part and parcel of grieving what "could have been," and while it's horrible, there isn't much to be done about it. Unless the individuals who

experienced a different aspect of the former are willing to truly hear you out and are willing to see the pain, hurt, and broken trust, you won't be able to change their minds. It's like my mother said about my grandmother, "My mother and your grandmother are two entirely different people."

You **absolutely do not** have to forgive them, as I have preached even recently that forgiveness comes after reconciliation, which won't happen in this case. Nor will I seek it. I tell my patients that you grieve the relationship – the hopes and wishes you had for the relationship that were missing. You grieve the hurt caused by the individual, and you allow yourself the grace to experience the pain and the release that comes with it. You forgive yourself for any weakness, anger, frustration, and pain you internalized during the toxic relationship, and you allow yourself to heal.

PS: Don't forget your red lipstick on January 6th, and Inauguration Day! Embrace rebellion!

Children's Religious Education: Update from Colleen Hamilton, Director of RE



Dear Families and Congregants,

Have you flipped your calendar to 2025 yet? Think of this annual routine as turning the page to a new chapter in the story of your life. Take a moment to devise an intriguing title, imagine a costume change for the main character, and plot how those personality traits that get you through the best of times and the worst of times will shine. This month, children in the Sunday Morning Community will take up the theme of *story*. Each theme of this church year is a practice that can help us embody love, the core value in Unitarian Universalism. We will explore how stories help us understand ourselves and connect to others—and how changing a narrative can even change the world.

An account of our "Journey to Bethlehem" performance in the Sunday service on December 15 reads as an excellent preface to this month's theme.

The Christian nativity story is one example of changing a narrative to change the world. According to biblical scholar Marcus J Borg, Luke's account of the birth of Jesus was an attempt to rewrite Emperor Augustus's claim to power. The political mythos of the time was that Augustus's father was the Roman god Apollo and that the emperor, as the son of a god, could thereby rule beyond question. Luke flipped this script about power by emphasizing the humble beginnings of the son of the Christian god. Unlike Augustus, Jesus did not gain power through generational wealth, nor did he impose his will through state-sanctioned violence. The question of whether Jesus's story will ultimately change the world for the better, on balance, remains open, I suppose, but Luke's new, anti-imperial narrative, along with others, has certainly had an impact for well-nigh 2,025 years. Our thanks go to all the participants who played a role in "A Journey to Bethlehem" and especially to Rev Johnnie for his very UU rendition of the nativity as a tale of liberating love.



If you've read to this point, you may or may not have come to agree about the power of stories, but you must share with me an interest in children, youth, and Religious Education at UUFS. Then why not help craft their plotline by attending the RE Team meeting on Monday, January 13, 7:00 to 8:00 via [Zoom](#)? After all, young people's upcoming chapters are the future of our whole human saga. Together, let's make 2025 a Religious Education best-seller at UUFS.

donations. Through the end of June, 2025, you can still donate via our UUFS donation page: <https://donate.uusc.org/sunnyvale24>, with your donation of \$150+ matched by the UU Congregation of Shelter Rock. Contact social.justice@uufs.org.

UUs Delivered Again to Help Our Community!



Thanks to everyone who donated to our annual UUndies Sundays drive in December! We delivered the following new items for the resident families of the Bill Wilson Center's Sunnyvale Shelter: 75 pairs of underwear, 78 pairs of socks, 22 T-shirts, 26 pajama sets, 1 pack of Huggies, 1 pack of detergent pods, 1 jacket, and 1 stuffed animal. In addition, our members donated \$1,000 online to the Bill Wilson Center, \$350 of which was employer matching!

The UUFS Caring and Support Team Is Here To Help You!

If you are looking for some help from our team, please contact co-coordinators Margaret Rich and Laurel Beecher at caring@uufs.org. We can offer meals, rides, phone check-ins, in-person visits, resource management (e.g., receive help with accessing more long-term help), in-home help with small home-maintenance jobs (e.g. replacing a ceiling light, fixing a leaky faucet), in-home help with small electronics problems or confusions (e.g. how to send unknown callers directly to voicemail, how to fix a paper jam in a printer, how to set up Alexa), in-home help with small sewing repairs, basic nursing tasks (e.g. wound care, help with understanding instructions from medical personnel), or miscellaneous tasks not mentioned above – **AND we always welcome new volunteers for the team!**

Volunteer to help prepare a meal for shelter residents

Social Justice at UUFS will again be providing a meal to 20 clients at a LifeMoves LGBTQ+ shelter in San Jose on February 2nd. We are looking for volunteers to help prepare food, either together with other volunteers or in your own home. Contact

Laurel Beecher at activities@uufs.org to volunteer or get more information.

Activities

Inter-Congregational All-Ages Game Night

Saturday, January 4 @ 5:00–7:00 p.m.

At UU Fellowship of Los Gatos

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 play knowing that their kids are happily occupied too. Enjoy good company and potluck snacks while we play.

Multigenerational Climate Discussion Circle

Saturday, January 18 @ 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Online via Zoom

We consider the tantalizing question *What If We Get It Right?* when we begin discussing the book of this title by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. This is a collection of interviews, essays, and artwork, which makes it easy for participants to drop in anytime and discuss their favorites—no pressure to attend every month or read every piece. We meet on Zoom (email redirector@uufs.org for the link). As the publisher puts it, “If you haven’t yet been able to picture a transformed and replenished world—or to see yourself, your loved ones, and your community in it—this book is for you.” Join us!

Religious Education Team Meeting

Monday, January 13 @ 7:00-8:00 p.m., via [Zoom](#)

For all those with an interest in children, youth, and Religious Education at UUFS. Together, let’s make 2025 a Religious Education best-seller at UUFS.

Social Justice & Climate Action Meeting

Thursday, January 23 @ 7:15-8:15 p.m.

Online via Zoom Contact: social.justice@uufs.org

All are welcome to join us at our monthly meeting as we discuss relevant topics and plan activities. Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96254752500>. If you would like to join our Google Group or have questions, contact social.justice@uufs.org.

The Book Group

Wednesday, January 22 @ 10:00 a.m.-
12:00 p.m. In person in a member's home

Join us as we discuss the entertaining novel [The Way We Live Now](#) by Anthony Trollope. Contact book.group@uufs.org to join us or to be added to our Google Group. We will soon announce our February book on the uufs.org [Book Group page](#) and also via our Google Group.

Men's Group

Meets weekly on Tuesday @ 7:15 - 8:15 p.m.
Online via Zoom - Contact: mens.group@uufs.org

Meditation Group

Meets weekly on Thursday @ 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.
Online via Zoom - Contact: 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

Contact Us

You can reach our office manager, Leah Simmons, at office@uufs.org or by calling (408) 739-0549. Reverend Johnnie's meeting hours are available [here](#). Please refer there for any pastoral care or operational needs. If the date does not have hours listed, please reach out at revjohnnie@uufs.org. He is, of course, always available for immediate spiritual emergencies via his cell phone. Contact webmaster@uufs.org regarding updates to our website. Please direct questions about this newsletter to: communications@uufs.org.
Note: [COVID-19 Policies and Guidelines](#).

Monthly Calendar

uufs.org/calendar/