

## 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 <a href="bit.ly/uufs-sunday-service">bit.ly/uufs-sunday-service</a>. 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 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 guestion. 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 guestion 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 <a href="Zoom">Zoom</a>? 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.

## President's Message - Karen Enz



I must confess that January is probably my least favorite month on the calendar. You may certainly share with me some of the reasons:

fatigue after the holidays, as wonderful as they can be, and the cold weather and dearth of light. I am definitely a "creature of the seasons" and if I was a bear, I would probably be hibernating. Since I cannot do that, I feel privileged to be able to spend most of the month in January in Hawaii to "recharge my batteries."

January does have its challenges. I also associate January with the icon of Janus-the two headed Roman god, one head looking backwards and the other looking forward. Personally, I have a fantasy that the head that is looking backward is shaking itself in disbelief at the events of the last two months. Though we don't have much direct control over the events that unfold in the political sphere, I also believe that we do have a great deal of control over the forward-looking face that we adopt as we start the new year.

January is also an important month to UUFS as we are mandated in the by-laws to have one of our two yearly Congregational meetings. I must admit that I have a bit of trepidation as it will be my first year of chairing the meeting, especially since I will be participating remotely. I know that I can count on others to assist me in making this a productive and well-conducted meeting. I hope as many people as possible attend as we turn an optimistic, yet realistic, face to the hopes and challenges of this new year.

In faith, Karen

## UUFS Annual Vision Budget Meeting Saturday January 18 2025 at 9:00 a.m. - Noon

Everyone is welcome to join us in the Chapel or on Zoom to just observe - or to add your thoughts to this uniquely Unitarian Universalist democratic

process as we come together to discuss our goals for the next fiscal year. If you've ever wondered how we put our annual budget together, this is your chance to find out! We will develop a first draft of next year's budget, incorporating our vision(s) for UUFS. Use this link to join via Zoom: budget.

## Semi-Annual Congregational Business Meeting Sunday, Jan. 19, 10:30-11:45 a.m., Chapel/Zoom

Prepare to join us as our bylaws require a quorum of at least 25% of our eligible voters to be present in order to conduct official business. The right to vote at our business meetings is reserved for members of this Fellowship who have been members for at least thirty days prior to the business meeting who have made a financial contribution of record within the twelve months preceding the meeting notice (which will go out ten days before the meeting), and have attained the voting age. The voting age is sixteen years of age unless our youth have successfully completed a "Unitarian Universalist Coming of Age Program," in which case the voting age is fourteen.

If you have been attending our Fellowship and are interested in learning more about becoming a member, please set up a time to speak with Reverend Johnnie via his Calendly booking page: <a href="https://calendly.com/rev-johnnie-bloom-ramirez">https://calendly.com/rev-johnnie-bloom-ramirez</a>.

Please note that our pledging friends and visitors are welcome to attend all of our business meetings, but will not be eligible to vote.

## Supporting Our Community and Values

## **Guest at Your Table Was a Huge Success!**

Thanks to those who donated to support human



rights here and abroad!! For more than 25 years UUFS members and friends have been strong supporters of the **Guest** 

**at Your Table** annual fundraiser for the UU Service Committee (UUSC). We consistently receive **Special Recognition** from UUSC. Member Janet Werkman generously provided \$10,000 in matching

donations. Through the end of June, 2025, you can still donate via our UUFS donation page: <a href="https://donate.uusc.org/sunnyvale24">https://donate.uusc.org/sunnyvale24</a>, 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), inhome 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 2<sup>nd</sup>. We are looking for volunteers to help prepare food, either together with other volunteers or in your own home. Contact

Laurel Beecher at <u>activities@uufs.org</u> 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: <a href="mailto:social.justice@uufs.org">social.justice@uufs.org</a>

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

### **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 <u>The Way We Live Now</u> 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 <u>Book Group page</u> 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: <a href="mailto:meditation@uufs.org">meditation@uufs.org</a>

## 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 <a href="webmaster@uufs.org">webmaster@uufs.org</a> regarding updates to our website. Please direct questions about this newsletter to: <a href="mailto:communications@uufs.org">communications@uufs.org</a>.

Note: COVID-19 Policies and Guidelines.

Monthly Calendar uufs.org/calendar/