Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale

November 2026

Fellowship News & Events

Join us on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in person at 1112 S Bernardo Ave, Sunnyvale, CA, or on Zoom at https://zoom.us/j/958336800.

Sunday Services

The Veil
November 1 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Member Kimberly Yancy

From Samhain and Día de los Muertos to All Saints and All Souls, traditions around the world hold that at this time of year the veil between the living and the dead grows thin. This Sunday we'll explore what these traditions teach us and reflect on the power of naming the ancestors who shaped us. Whether you join us in person or online, please bring a photo or memento of a departed loved one as we honor, mourn, and celebrate them together.

Children's Sunday Morning Community, 9:15-11:30 a.m.
Kids will assemble in the Conference Room for their Chalice Time and hands-on activity: cutting tissue paper to make a garland and marigolds. At the end of their time in the sanctuary, the adults will come over to the Conference Room, where all ages will place items of remembrance, along with the tissue paper decorations, on an altar for the occasion of Dia de los Muertos, All Saints, and All Souls days–all of which feature in the heritage traditions of members of our congregation. During the all-ages social hour thereafter, adults and children can continue the activities in the Conference Room and enjoy a special treat together.

Does Gender Matter?
November 8 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Riya Suising

Riya Suising (she/her) has been publicly identified as a transgender woman over the years. She will share tidbits from her journey around her identity, and will explore with the audience key issues we all face today, as we discover more people around us identifying as non-binary, or at least questioning gender identity as it pertains to everyday policies.

11:00 a.m.- Noon - Conference Room
Join Riya for a follow-up Q&A and discussion of the issues, trends and policies presented in her homily.

Civil Rights in the USA and The Netherlands
November 15 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Member Kees Vissers

Both the USA and The Netherlands have an important recognition of individual rights. The USA in the declaration of independence and constitution and The Netherlands in the constitution of 1814. After some historic perspective I will talk about the current day situations and the challenges in each society. I will end with a hopeful view with the 'power of the people' for modern times. I will briefly touch on the role of The Hague, the city where I was born.

Fellowship Potluck
November 22 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Members and friends

After a brief service we will have a brunch potluck. Stay tuned for details in the Mid-Week Update.

TBD - Reverend Ron Ahnen
November 29 @ 9:30-10:30 a.m.
By Reverend Ron Ahnen

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



Dear Families and Congregants,

The idea that the world of the living and the world of the dead draw closer in autumn seems like a natural response to increasing darkness, hibernating animals, and buried seeds. Fear of the unknown realm may creep more into our consciousness at this time or a closer connection to those on the other side may well up in our hearts. Natural as seasonal remembrance may seem, there is hardly anything more deeply held within cultures than memorial traditions. It is in November, then, when that gnarliest of spooks, cultural appropriation, haunts any conscientious Unitarian Universalist.

What prompted reflections on pluralism this year in particular? I have had the great pleasure of working with several congregants, along with my co-educator Leah Simmons, to design a multicultural all-ages service and social hour for November 1. This date is at the nexus of many different customs related to those who have passed. On the pagan calendar, Samhain begins at nightfall on October 31 and ends after a period of twenty-four hours when spirits may be more present. Drawing on this ancient tradition, Halloween takes its name from the subsequent All Saints and All Souls days of Catholicism. In Mesoamerica, this Christian observance combined with seasonal indigenous traditions and became Dia de los Muertos. UUFS folks, including Lety Gonzalez, Debbie Timmers, and Kimberly Yancey, shared their knowledge of these and other traditions to plan the special service and social hour on Sunday, the first day of the month.

Our collaboration feels like a genuinely mutual exchange, but UUFS must remain vigilant about letting inclusion slide into appropriation. The Unitarian Universalist Association urges leaders to consider the relationships involved in cross-cultural experiences. November 1 has significance in multiple traditions represented by active members of our community. That relationship will make for a diverse service and social hour for all to enjoy. I look forward to seeing you there!

Supporting Our Community and Values

Guest at Your Table

In the month of November, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale will join UU communities across the nation to learn about and support the vital human rights work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) through the Guest at Your Table campaign. UUSC has its roots in the 1940's when courageous Unitarians risked their lives to help refugees in Europe escape Nazi terror. Over the past 80 years, UUSC has lived our Unitarian Universalist values by bolstering grassroots-led movements for change in the United States and throughout the world, defending civil liberties, democracy, and civil rights.

As authoritarianism rises and vulnerable communities come under attack, this work is more vital than ever. Through the Guest at Your Table campaign, we will learn how UUSC is working to safeguard the right to protest and dissent, uphold the right to refuge and asylum, advance gender justice, counter attacks on human rights institutions, and resist climate regression.

UUFS has a long-standing tradition of exceptionally generous support for UUSC. Your donation will have an especially powerful impact due to the commitment of a UUFS member to match the gifts of other members. In addition, the Shelter Rock congregation will match every gift of $150 or more. This means your gift can be tripled! And UUSC, as a human rights organization, is eligible to receive employer matching grants, so you may be able to quadruple your gift if your employer participates.

Stay tuned for information on how to support this vital work and thank you for your generosity!

Report from the Board President

Minister search
Our search application has been submitted to the UUA and is waiting for approval. Before it goes live, we're making revisions based on helpful feedback from Mx Sam Pearl, our UUA regional contact, and finishing a draft ministerial agreement using the UUA's newly updated model.

A word about timing: we're listed in the UUA's open contract search, which runs year-round. Assuming we're still searching on December 1, the UUA will move us into the spring "Primetime" search, when many more ministers are looking. We'll share more as the search progresses.

Many thanks to the Minister Search Committee, and to Julia Blankenship for keeping the paperwork moving. Thanks also to Alan Herrmann and Susan Englert for drafting the agreement, and to Christine Purcell of the UUA Transitions Office.

Once our listing is live, you can help by pointing ministers you know toward it, and by speaking well of UUFS. Ministers do their homework on congregations, and what they hear from us matters.

Listening circles
Throughout October we've been gathering in small groups to talk about what UUFS means to us and where we hope it goes. Our fifth and final circle is this Sunday, November 1, on Zoom at 11:00, after the service. If you haven't joined one yet, there's still room. See http://listening.uufs.org.

When the circles wrap up, a large share of the people involved in our community will have helped shape our priorities for the years ahead. The team will put together a short summary of what we heard and share it sometime this winter, before the longer planning work begins.

Thank you to our hosts, Phil Nies, Margaret Lawson, Mary Ellen Bercik and Gary Beckstrom, and to our facilitators, Debbie Timmers, Phil Nies, Kimberly Yancey and Martha Schumacher. Special thanks to Tara Martin-Milius, who organized the whole effort and will facilitate Sunday's Zoom circle.

Vision and mission
A small team, Matt Peters, Sam Knapp and Karin Golde, will draft new vision and mission statements for UUFS, drawing on the May workshop and what we hear in the circles. We'll share a draft in the spring, aiming for a congregational vote in May. Diana Luykx is the board's contact for the team.

Staff support
Without a minister, we've leaned on a small staff team to keep things running. Leah Simmons and Julia Blankenship are both available to help committees and teams. If your group could use some support, check with Diana Luykx, who coordinates their work.

As always, feel free to reach out to me or any board member.

Demyn Plantenberg, Board President
board.president@uufs.org

Activities

Worship Associates Meeting
Sunday, November 15 @ 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
We meet in the conference room

Interested in helping shape our Sunday services? The Worship Team invites you to the **Worship Associates Meeting** on **Sunday, November 15**. We're seeking people who would like to take part in any aspect of creating meaningful worship — from hosting and giving homilies to behind-the-scenes coordination and brainstorming future speakers and themes.

This is a great opportunity to learn more about how our services come together and to share your ideas, talents, and enthusiasm.

Inter-congregational All-Ages Game Night
Saturday, November 7 @ 5:00–7:00 p.m.
At UU Fellowship of Sunnyvale

Board-game enthusiasts meet on the first Saturday of every other month from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. All ages, including families with children, are welcome. Pizza provided; other potluck snacks and nonalcoholic drinks are welcome. Please click here for more details about our Game Night.

Social Justice & Climate Action Meeting
Wednesday, November 25 @ 7:30-8:30 p.m.
NOTE: tentative date, please check weekly update
Online via Zoom

All are welcome to join us at our monthly meeting as we discuss relevant topics and plan activities for the upcoming year. Zoom link: Social Justice . If you would like to join our Google Group or have questions, contact social.justice@uufs.org.

The Book Group
Friday, November 20 @ 10-11:30 a.m.
NOTE: change of usual date.
In person, in a member's home

November is poetry month. Bring a **favorite poem/s** to read or recite.
One you wrote, one you like, one you can't understand but want to read it anyway.
Or just come to listen!

All future (and past) book selections are posted on the uufs.org Book Group page and also via our Google Group. Contact 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: 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.

Contact webmaster@uufs.org regarding updates to our website. For questions about this newsletter and for Mid-Week Update and Newsletter or Web submissions, contact communications@uufs.org.

Monthly Calendar
uufs.org/calendar/