

U2C2 Connection

A monthly newsletter published by the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Sacramento
December 2007

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The Principles and Sources of the Unitarian Universalist Association

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

A Month of Sundays



Worship Services are held Sundays at 10:30am (except as noted).

Sunday, December 2, 10:30am

“Advent: Deepening the Spiritual Journey”

In the Christian tradition, Advent is the period of preparation for the birth of Jesus. The word “advent” means “coming” or “drawing near,” which suggests active movement rather than passive waiting. The Advent season offers an opportunity to place Christmas, and all that it symbolizes, in the context of a spiritual journey.

Worship Leader: Allison Claire/Worship Associate: Kurt Schmidt

Sunday, December 9, 10:30am

“The Way We Were”

Tis the season to wax nostalgic...or not. Martha will consider the uses of memory, how we revise and re-create the past and what individual and collective memory may have to do with what we call “soul.”

Worship Leader: Rev. Martha Hodges/Worship Associate: Jim Skow

Sunday, December 16, 10:30am

We will honor the Pagan origins of this holiday season in our traditional Solstice service as we celebrate the turning of the seasons of our lives, the times of darkness and the return of the light.

Worship Leader: Lucy Bunch and friends/Worship Associate: Karen Gunderson

Saturday, December 22, 7:00am

Yes, 7:00a.m., as in, “in the morning!” Come to Gristmill-Access Park for an outdoor sunrise service as we greet the reborn sun and contemplate the changes in our lives over the past year.

Worship Leader: Ken De Crescenzo

Sunday, December 23, 10:30am

Intergenerational Christmas Service. Come with the family to celebrate our special Unitarian Universalist Christmas and the Season of Lights. Among other delights, our children will treat us to a holiday pageant.

Worship Leader: Rev. Martha Hodges/Worship Associate: Allison Claire

Note that there will be two Christmas Eve services this year due to our rather limited space. Both will feature carol singing and candles. Children (and adults) are welcome to attend one or both and join potluck refreshments in between the two services from 6pm to 7pm.

Monday, December 24, 5:00pm [Christmas Eve service 1]

This Christmas Eve service will be a joyful mix of the secular and the sacred, and is designed with the whole family in mind.

Monday, December 24, 7:00pm [Christmas Eve service 2]

This will be a slightly more solemn and traditional celebration of Christmas Eve with lovely music and readings in appreciation of this Holy Night.

Sunday, December 30, 10:30am

“The Thing with Feathers”

Even the most jaded among us, may form some secret resolutions to be “better” at this time of year. Martha will reflect on the nature of hope, the place of hope in our Unitarian and Universalist traditions and the difficulty of maintaining hope in the face of often bleak realities.

Worship Leader: Rev. Martha Hodges/Worship Associate: Nina Weiler-Harwell

December Planner

2007

If you have a meeting or event this month and don't see it listed, please contact the office at 689-2008 or ucc@cwnet.com.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Sunday Worship 10:30am Newcomer Welcome 11:30-12:30 Sr. High Grp 6pm	3	4	5	6 Daytimers 10am at church	7	8 New Member Orientation 1pm-4pm 2nd Sat Supper
9 Sunday Worship 10:30am Theatre Group Reservations Due New Member Recognition	10 Membership Committee Mtg 7-9pm	11	12	13 Daytimers 10am at church Board Mtg 7:15pm	14 Theatre Group 8pm	15 Men's Group Breakfast 9:00am Newsletter Deadline
16 Sunday Worship 10:30am Finance Mtg 12pm Women's Group 4pm Sr. High Grp 6pm	17	18	19	20 Daytimers 10am at church	21	22 "Sunrise" Worship Service 7am
23 "Intergenerational Christmas" Worship Service 10:30am	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> 1st Xmas Eve Service 5pm 2nd Xmas Eve Service 7pm	25 <i>Christmas Day</i> 	26	27 Daytimers 10am at church Church Ops Mtg 7pm (offsite)	28	29
30 Sunday Worship 10:30am	31					

Worship Support Schedule

Altar	Greeters	Lighters	Ushers
12/02 Celia Buckley	Tom Rintoul, Merry Walle	Michael E.	Tonie Darling
12/09 Beverly Boido	TBD	Jesse E.	Rebecca Fain
12/16 Sybil Lawson	Sybil Lawson	Annika L.	Thomas Lawson
12/23 Georgene Tarble	Celia Buckley	Oliver B.	Ernie Tomassilli
12/24 TBD	Rebecca Fain	TBD	Celia Buckley
12/30 Jenn Richard	Merry Walle	Ben C.M.	TBD

Monthly Greeter: Frieda Fergus

Minister's Message

Grace Notes: Advent for Children and the Rest of Us

In the Christian tradition, Advent is a month of prayer and joyful anticipation leading up to the birth of Jesus. Christian or not, we can all appreciate the pleasure of waiting for something much desired.

In my distinctly non-Christian family, we celebrated the coming of Christmas in a big way. We three children took turns opening the windows of an Advent calendar – the more glitter on it, the better – to reveal a surprise image every day: a teddy bear, a candy cane, or a candle. The image on the 25th day was always one of the nativity scene. This ritual helped us to count the days until Christmas, but more importantly, it increased our feelings of anticipation. Christmas became more important because we had waited for it with such excitement and learned the exquisite pleasure of delayed gratification.

I was lucky enough to grow up in a family that baked fruitcakes, made a gingerbread house from scratch, displayed a beautiful crèche, and painted our own wrapping paper for Christmas gifts. There were lots of traditional activities that we did together as a family...my family of loners that did not normally do things together. In this way, we marked the days leading up to Christmas as special, a time out of normal time.

So why is it exactly, that we await with such hope during the time of Advent? For the youngest among us, it may be the presents. As I recall though, it was really not about the presents for me, even as a child. It was about the Christmas story itself and the sense that something mysterious and wonderful was coming. I never believed in the literal truth of a baby god born to a virgin, but I believed fully in the feeling behind the story. I intuitively understood that this was a story about longings granted; about the hope for miracles; the wish for something extraordinary to occur, perhaps in the form of a terrifying angel descending to be among us to tell us not to fear; and the possibility that an infant, poor and rejected, might turn out to be everything we most need and desire.

I hope that during this month of December, you will be able to discover or re-discover this sense of wondrous anticipation. Try to shed the exhaustion, the cynicism, the commercialism, and take

a moment to ask yourself what it is you hope for. What we long for can teach us who we are. However you understand Divinity or Goodness or Ultimate Reality, try imagining what it would feel like to believe that this was coming to you, that every day brought closer to fulfillment of a promise which you long for – whether that be forgiveness, a sense of belonging in the universe, a feeling of peace, a world of justice and mercy, or the conviction that you are loved for who you truly are. The authors of the Christian gospels knew human nature. They knew that these are things that we long for and the promises of the Jesus story. We don't have to believe in the historical or theological accuracy of the story to believe in its spiritual authenticity.

I wish us all a deeply meaningful Christmas season.

- Rev. Martha Hodges, UUCU Minister

President's Note

Community Meeting Follow Up

Dear Congregation,

I want to thank you for your participation in the Community meeting that was held November 11. Always looking for ways to engage you, I would be happy to receive any feedback you have about the meeting. Did you find it valuable in terms of providing you with information about some of the things going on in the church? Did the format of the meeting work for you? What would you change? What would you keep? Would you like to see something like this happen more often, if so, how often? What kinds of information are of interest to you and how would you like to receive it? Please feel free to share you thoughts with me in any form that works for you - email, phone call, in person or carrier pigeon.

The holidays are upon us and with this will come our first experience of having two services on the same day. This is an important undertaking for us and an important step taken in our transformation from a family to a program church. While a little scary, it is also pretty exciting and I hope you will have similar feelings. I also hope you are thinking about all of the friends and family you would like to extend an invitation to join you in worship of the holiday season.

With gratitude for you all,
Marion Randall, UUCU President

How to Join Us

Did You Think We'd Never Ask?

Rev. Martha tells a story about a woman who had been a "friend" of one of the churches she knows. This person had been giving money to the church for twenty years, but had never become a member. When someone asked her why she had never joined, she replied, "No one ever asked me!" Well, we're asking!

If you have been considering becoming a member of this congregation, now is a great time to do it! There will be a formal recognition of new members as part of our December 9 service and we would love to include you in it.

To join UUCC, you must fill out a blue membership form and indicate how much you want to pledge to the operating costs of the church. We would love to have you pledge to the UUCC Campaign for Growth as well. Limited financial means should never keep anyone from joining this church, however. While we want and need your financial support, not everyone is in a position to make a large pledge, and we understand this. Your time is an equally precious commodity and we happily welcome this kind of support, in addition to (or in cases of financial hardship, instead of) monetary donations.

There will be a sign-up sheet at the Welcome Table on which you can indicate that you'd like to speak to Laura Osborne or Rev. Martha about joining us. We want you as a member of this beloved community!

Important Information for New Members

Rev. Martha will lead an orientation session for anyone interested in becoming a member of UUCC on Saturday, December 8, from 1pm-4pm. If you are considering joining the church, please let Martha know as soon as possible whether or not you can attend this session.

If you are already a member, but have not yet been officially "welcomed" in a Sunday service, please let Martha know this as well. We would like to include you in a special new member recognition ceremony on December 9.

Newcomer Welcome

Reverend Martha is available following the service on the first Sunday of each month to meet informally with newcomers. This is a chance to get to know each other a bit and to answer any questions you may have about this church or about Unitarian Universalism. This is a low-key way to begin to make connections here and you are committing to nothing by attending.

Thanks & Congrats

You Are Such a Generous People

Our special collection for the Bravo family on November 11 raised \$961! This money has been deposited in the Bravo Family Memorial account and will go to support this family of six children left orphaned by the tragic murder-suicide of their parents. If you would like to know how else you might be helpful to them, talk to Gene Anderson.

For more on the subject of our collective generosity, see the article in this newsletter on "Sharing Our Abundance."

Congratulations, Rosemary Miles

Rosemary Miles, who started a doctoral program in 1998 has been approved to graduate on January 19, 2008 in Santa Barbara with a doctorate in Clinical Psychology. Rosemary plans to go on to a post doctoral fellowship year and then sit for her licensing exam. Her areas of special clinical interest include grief and loss issues, treating survivors of trauma, chronic illness and pain management. She currently has a private practice in Elk Grove. Rosemary is grateful for the community of UUCC well-wishers who have given her support through the years.

Reminders

UUCC Raley's Card

The Raley shopping card provides UUCC with a steady source of income. We get a percentage return from each shopping dollar spent. If you don't have a card, please request one from Dick Tarble.

Growing Together

Sharing Our Abundance

Again and again, experience in our congregations shows that Unitarian Universalists welcome the opportunity to give to causes that need our support when asked to do so as part of our regular Sunday offerings. Not only does the church's share of the collection not suffer; it actually increases when we "share the plate." The real purpose of this practice though, is to embody our principles and to grow a sense of ourselves as caring and responsible communities. We all know that, as individuals, we give where we can to causes we find worthy, but something beautiful happens when we do this as a body. We show the world – and ourselves – that compassion and commitment to respond to those in need are part of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist church. It becomes a shared spiritual practice.

With this in mind, the Board voted to begin doing this at UUCC. Twelve organizations were chosen, representing a range of needs, each to receive a quarter of our offering for one month. The list was presented to the congregation at our Community Meeting on November 11 in order to get a consensus that these were suitable choices. While no objections were raised about the organizations suggested, there were questions about the logistics of doing this. To clarify, pledge contributions will not be counted in the total to be divided. Therefore, pledge payments will need to be marked as such.

The Board will continue to address any logistical questions that come up about how this will be implemented, but in the meantime, it was agreed that one fourth of our December offerings not earmarked as pledge payments will be given to the South Sacramento Interfaith Partnership Emergency Food Closet to make holiday baskets for hungry families. Watch for announcements on other ways UUCC can support this special effort.

What follows is a list of the other organizations tentatively approved by the Board and the congregation for receiving a share of our abundance over the next twelve months.

WEAVE (Women Escaping a Violent Environment) (offers counseling, intervention, advocacy, a hotline, legal services and a safehouse)

Maryhouse (provides daytime hospitality to homeless women and children)

Sacramento Children's Home (provides

intervention and treatment for at-risk children; raising money for Cottage Fund for residential treatment)

Elk Grove Food Bank (operates Food Bank, Clothes Closet, Helping Hands (counseling and referral) and Community Garden)

Breaking Barriers Community Services Center (provides outreach to poor and homeless LGBT people and living assistance to those living with catastrophic illness, i.e., HIV/AIDS and breast cancer)

Sacramento Valley Conservancy (purchases and protects wild areas; currently trying to purchase Deer Creek Hills area.)

Creative Living Options (supports independent living for developmentally disabled adults.)

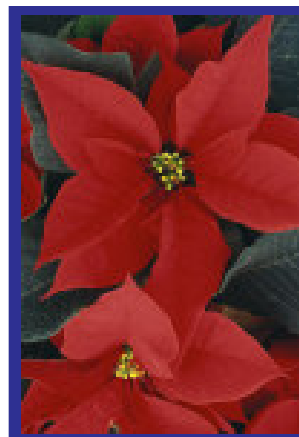
Sacramento SPCA

Sacramento Loaves and Fishes

Sacramento Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Sacramento Planned Parenthood

Reviewing Our Seven UU Principles



The Unitarian Universalist Association's *Commission on Appraisal* is engaged in a mandated periodic re-assessment of our treasured principles. All of our congregations have been asked to participate in this review. In this rather hectic time of beginning a new ministry together, this call has been put on a back burner...until now!

The UUA has extended the deadline for congregational feedback until January, and our own Eric Walle and Mary Helen Doherty attended a district training in facilitating this process. They will be co-facilitating a workshop later this month, where we will discuss whether the Principles and Sources are relevant and sufficient as they stand, or whether they need to be revised. If you would like to join others in this important conversation, please let Eric know by December 7. This will allow our facilitators to contact you about the best meeting time.

Growth Statistics

Report on Growth:

Are we growing yet? We currently have 85 members, up from 82 last January. These numbers will be changing shortly, as we make contact with those no longer active, plus invite others to join. We had hoped to have much more growth, but there are some very good reasons why we have not grown and some good reasons why the future looks positive for growth.

Here are some reasons we are still encouraged about growth:

- We have had four ministers in the last four years (as Rev. Melora left, we had a planned, two years of interim ministers). We now have wonderful Rev. Martha Hodges with us, our settled minister who arrived in August. According to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), those who are in interim years tend to have a decrease in membership. It is a good sign that we remained stable during these years of much change.
- With our new settled minister, our “path to membership” is becoming better planned and consistent. With so many changes in ministers previously, the “path to membership” was always in flux.
- We are now tracking attendance much better than previously. With the tracking information, we are now better able analyze our progress and growing edges.
- What do our statistics show? From the information below (see UUCC Statistics), we can see that we are keeping the expected percentage of visitors. However, we need to get more visitors in the door. The statistics show that money would be well spent on effective advertising. The timing for this could not be better. There is advertising happening nationally, in the Bay Area, and now locally, thanks to Eric Walle’s efforts with mailings and advertisements in our area.

We are grateful for the help of our Pacific Central District (PCD) and their Growth Committee, which have given us two grants in the past year. One was a \$1,000 “Commuter Grant”, used to advertise in our area and piggyback on the Bay Area’s advertising campaign. The other was a grant to redesign our web site. Our web site is vital to getting people in the door.

Within our membership, commitment to UUCC is strong. Our pledges last spring increased 15 per-

cent from the previous year and now we average \$1750 per household annually. Our average attendance has increased about 30 percent in the past two years.

With all of the above, we feel we are on our way to growth.

UUCC Statistics:

These statistics are based on Linda Laskowski’s presentation, “Churches that Count”. Linda is a member of the Berkeley UU church.

Visitors/year to Member ratio

Ideal: # of adult visitors in one year = number of members

UUCC: 75 adult visitors last year : 82 members = 91 percent

Percentage of Visitors at Worship

Ideal: 5 percent or more

UUCC: 2.5 percent (Low!)

Returning Visitors

Usual: 20-40 percent still with you after 6 months

UUCC: 28 percent, looking at the past 3-9 months

New Members

Usual: 15-20 percent of visitors become members

UUCC: 17 percent

Active Members (attends more than Sunday worship)

Expect: around 65 percent

UUCC: 65 percent

Leaving Membership

Expect: 10 percent membership loss each year

UUCC: Last year we lost 10 percent. All were no longer active in the church.

From the above, we see that we need more visitors, but how many more? Let’s say we want to go from 82 members to 100 in one year. How many adult visitors do we need each Sunday? Simple, 3.

Save the Date

Don’t Forget the Action Auction

Think about the Action Auction during the holidays. Let us help you, Recycle, Reduce and Reuse! The Action Auction has been postponed until Saturday, February 23. The good news is this gives us all time to think about that perfect service or item we want to donate to help make this year’s auction the most successful fund raiser yet. More details about the auction will follow in future newsletters, all church emails and orders of service.

Installation Ceremony: Mark Your Calendars

Rev. Martha will be officially "installed" as our called minister in a ceremony scheduled for January 27, 2008 at 4:00pm. This is one of those "pomp and circumstance" occasions that we UUs don't get to do very often. Please plan to be there!

Ongoing Activities

Theatre Group

The Theatre Group will see "The Amen Corner" by James Baldwin at Celebration Arts Theatre, 4469 D Street, Sacramento, at 8:00pm on Friday, December 14. Reservations (\$15 & \$13) by Sunday, December 9 to Frieda Fergus.

Men's Group

The Men's Breakfast will be held on Saturday, December 15th. Yippee! Feel free to bring a friend. No friends, you say? Then bring a stranger. In fact, the stranger, the better. The men's group meets at 9am on third Saturdays. For more information, please contact Patrick Cody.

Women's Group

The UUCC Women's Group met in November to form a women's chalice circle. Invitations are being sent out to all women who have participated in the past. Please call Annette Emery, if you are interested in participating. The group will form after the start of the new year.

Second Saturday Supper

The November supper was hosted by Gene and Bill Anderson. The December supper will be on Saturday the 8th. Hosts are needed. If you wish to attend or host, please call or email Gene Anderson.

RE Corner

UUCC DRE Position Update

The hiring of the DRE position is progressing. We have received applications from three highly qualified applicants. The Interview Committee (Mary Helen Doherty, Annette Emery, Rev. Martha & Gina Guarneri) hope to hold interviews the last week of November through the first week of December. We will keep you posted!

Religious Education News

The RE teachers (John Sugar, Ernie Tomassilli, Tom Rintoul, and Annette Emery) have been leading the children through the old testament. They are learning about some of the key events through a UU perspective. As we enter December, the focus will shift to new testament stories and the teachings of Jesus. This will also be a time for the children to give to others through a designated charity. More information will come home with the children.

Helping Hands

SSIP News

UUCC is a member of the South Sacramento Interfaith Partnership (SSIP). Our main activity is the Food Closet. Gina Guarneri is our SSIP representative.

Food Closet Coordinator: SSIP is seeking a part-time (20 - 30 hours a week) Food Closet Coordinator. The responsibilities include coordination of Food Closet work, recruitment and support of volunteers, partnering with the SSIP Board and Committees, and outreach to member churches & community food providers. If you are interested in serving South Sacramento families through the Food Closet, contact Rev. Gary Grundman at 421-1017 for a job description and more information.

Holiday Giving: As you prepare to celebrate the holidays, please include the SSIP Food Closet in your giving. The Food Closet will always accept food, but prefers monetary donations. The reason is that SSIP purchases food at a significant discount (ie .15 cents per pound); therefore your money goes further. In addition, many supermarkets already donate canned goods. Donations can be given to Gina in person or they can be mailed to: SSIP, 5625 24th Street, Sacramento, 95822.

Community Events

Afro-Cuban Music & Drumming

Afro-Cuban Music and Drumming, December 9, 1:30pm - Come join Alex, Laura and Tom for some after-church fun. The Central Library (828 I Street, Sacramento) will be presenting "Offerings from the Heart: Afro-Cuban Music and drumming with Ebo Okaokan", an exciting troupe of musicians, dancers and singers. Hope you will join us! After church get some lunch, then join us at the Central Library for the show.

Sacramento Master Singers Present "Behold the Star"

As many of you know, Celia Buckley and Lucy Bunch sing with this fabulous group and would be honored if you would consider attending one of their holiday concerts. This year's concert is sure to please the audience with a nice balance of classical and contemporary works.

All four "Behold the Star" concerts will be held at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church (26th & K Streets) in Sacramento.

- Sunday, December 9th at 3:00pm
- Saturday, December 15th at 8:00pm
- Sunday, December 16th at 7:00pm
- Thursday December 20th at 7:00pm

Tickets at the door (if available) are \$18. Advance tickets through Celia or Lucy are \$15.00. Call Celia for more information.

This year's Children's concert "Jingle all the Way" (best for the 2 to 7 year old child) will be on Sunday, December 16th at 4:00pm. Ticket prices are \$3 for children and \$5 for accompanying adults.

About Us

Mission

The ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church is to foster open minds, caring hearts, helping hands, and growing spirits in a congregation of all ages. By living and sharing Unitarian Universalist values, our spiritual and intentionally diverse community seeks to bring compassion and justice to the world.

UUC is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the Pacific Central District (PCD) of the UUA.

Membership

Would you like to be a formal member of this congregation? We would love to have you as a member!

If you would like membership information or if you feel ready to sign our membership book, you may talk to Eric Walle or Laura Osborne.

Membership requirements are:

- 1) you must be at least 16 years old
- 2) you accept our principles and purposes
- 3) you make and fulfill a commitment to an annual contribution of record through a pledge of money and/or services.

We are a wonderful congregation and we will welcome you with open arms.

Contact

Newsletter

U2C2 Connection Editor:

Newsletter contributions should be sent to the UUC church address, phoned in to 689-2008, faxed to 689-2282 or emailed to uucc@cwnet.com by the 15th of each month.

Editorial Advisor - newsletter:

Nancy Flagg 689-2008 or uucc@cwnet.com

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Office Hours: Tue/Thur/Sat 8am-12pm

Minister's Hours: Mon/Wed/Thu 12am-3pm (and by appointment)

Leadership

Minister:

Rev. Martha Hodges, 689-2073

uucc_minister@frontiernet.net

Director of Religious Education:

[to be determined]

Board of Trustees:

President: Marion Randall

Vice President: John Sugar

Secretary: Wynne Skow

Treasurer: Steve Bakken

At-Large Members: Laura Osborne, Maggie Melnick, Ken DeCrescenzo

Endowment Trust: Mark Callicotte

Committees:

Church Operations Committee: Laura Osborne

Canvass Committee: Celia Buckley

Committee on Ministry: Tom Rintoul, Richard

Leimbach, Celia Buckley

Finance Committee: Mark Callicotte

Membership Committee: Eric Walle (chair)

Openers/Closers Supervisor: [to be determined]

Religious Education Committee: Alison Navas

Social Action (Bag Days): Celia Buckley

Worship Committee: Lucy Bunch (chair)

Beliefs Within Our Faith

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion that encompasses many faith traditions. Unitarian Universalists include people who identify as Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Pagans, Atheists, Agnostics, Humanists, and others. As there is no official Unitarian Universalist creed, Unitarian Universalists are free to search for truth on many paths.



Unitarian Universalist Community Church
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