Living with Integrity, Nurturing Wonder, Inspiring Action

We have two services each Sunday at 9:15 and 11:15 AM

This month's worship theme is INTEGRITY.

“When you get your, 'Who am I?' question right, all of your, 'What should I do?' questions tend to take care of themselves.” —Richard Rohr

Sunday, January 5
Rev. Julia Hamilton
“The Burning Bowl: Casting Out Fear”
The New Year brings us a chance to look back at the old year and decide to let go of that which no longer serves us. What is weighing you down or holding you back? What do you want to clear away so that there is space for new growth? The Burning Bowl is a dramatic annual ritual that invites us to cast off our fears and embrace new possibilities.

Chancel Choir will sing.

Sunday, January 12
Rev. Julia Hamilton
“2020 Vision”
2020 is a critical year. The decisions that lie ahead of us will determine the future of our country and our planet. If we are to have an impact, we must have a vision. What is our role, as a progressive faith community, in the year ahead?

*Special event: Celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Freedom Warming Centers! Join us in Parish Hall at 2:00 PM.

Sunday, January 19
Rev. Julia Hamilton
“The Human Family”
A special Sunday celebrating our community connections and embracing the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Our choir joins with the choir from Congregation B’nai B’rith as we weave song into a shared vision of a more beloved community.

All choirs will sing.

Sunday, January 26
Worship Hosts: Ken Ralph and Chuck Flacks
“Built to Last”
Structural integrity is the ability of an item to hold together under a load, including its own weight, without breaking or deforming excessively. When things go wrong, items with structural integrity generally fail safely, avoiding catastrophic failure. Join us as we explore ways to build lives capable of surviving the inevitable setbacks and even disasters that may befall each of us.
Congregational Ends Survey is Coming . . . Again!

Every spring we take the pulse of our congregation with our Congregational Ends survey. Last year had 209 congregants provide their feedback. Let’s increase that number this year!

To prepare yourself for the survey, please reflect on your experience at the Society in the context of our Ends. Ask yourself what our Ends mean to you and how the Society helps you fully live them. Talk to your fellow congregants about them. Can you see how the activities at the Society support our Ends, and thus, our mission?

To get you started in your thought process, here are our six Ends grouped under their corresponding mission statement:

LIVING WITH INTEGRITY, WE:
1. Support each other in life and life’s transitions with loving care, joy, celebration and gratitude.
2. Care for the earth and its rich web of life for current and future generations.

NURTURING WONDER, WE:
3. Experience the transcendent that opens us to deep connection and life’s mystery.
4. Cultivate spiritual practices and engage in lifelong learning, utilizing our hearts and minds.

INSPIRING ACTION, WE:
5. Shift the larger culture toward justice and compassion through bold individual and congregational endeavors.
6. Welcome and connect with people across differences of ethnicity, class, sexual identity, religion, politics and education.

Stay tuned for more details about the survey, like, “when will I get the opportunity to provide my valuable input to this community?” If you have any feedback or questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out and talk to one of the board members. Thank you for being engaged and helping the board support this vibrant community!

Board of Trustees
Gratitude and Giving Reflection

When I first came to a service here at the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara, about five years ago, the welcoming words “We’re a community of seekers living with integrity, nurturing wonder, and inspiring action” absolutely hooked me! Very simple words, very relatable words, and very inspiring words that succinctly lay out our mission here at USSB.

We hear these words every Sunday in one form or another. I love those words. When I first heard them from one those pews (way in the back!) I realized I might have found a place to rekindle my spiritual journey. I was here because I had recently begun a phase of consciously trying to live with more integrity and wanted to build on that with some spiritual growth.

I had never heard a religious community define themselves that way. Those words spoke to my core and piqued my curiosity. So I came back and listened some more. I heard more stories and sermons that not only moved me emotionally but also energized me with a passion to do and be better. I realized there were other people who felt like I do! It was wonderfully inspiring!

I was raised by a devout family with a religion that did nothing for me, and turned me off of organized religion. Even though I was motivated by what I experienced here, it still took the membership coordinator months to get me to attend an “Introduction to USSB” meeting, where I learned about UU lore and its long history of working on social issues.

After that meeting, I realized that all those UU communities across the globe, and USSB right here at home, were made up of people with integrity and a passion for working to improve this tired world of ours.

Shortly thereafter I realized I wanted to be a part of that community so I became a member and signed the book, and agreed to give an annual contribution so USSB could support all of us and our important work. To this day I have not one regret for joining this organized religion!

In gratitude,
Jack Rief, USSB Board Treasurer

Solo Connection

A new UU group is forming to provide support and resource information for folks in the congregation who are living on their own. Our first event will be a potluck brunch on New Year’s Day at noon in Parish Hall. Please RSVP so we know how many to expect. Reply on Realm or contact Rachel Aarons or Keith Strohmaier directly to sign up.
The Story Behind Courage to Search

Part I: Courage to Search Begins in Houston

Courage to Search was originally developed to supplement the spiritual wellness program at The Women’s Home, a non-profit located in Houston, Texas. The Women’s Home provides a residential treatment and transitional housing program to help prevent and end homelessness in the Houston community. In order to help women reclaim their stability, The Women’s Home uses the Whole Life model, which addresses six areas: emotional/mental wellness, financial wellness, physical wellness, social wellness, spiritual wellness, and vocational wellness.

In early 2013, The Women’s Home was looking for a way to deepen the spiritual wellness component of the program so that their participants could engage in spiritual growth more formally. Knowing that prospective participants may have mental health concerns or past emotional and physical trauma, the working group tasked with developing this new program decided they needed something that would:

- Be cross-culturally stable
- Be accessible to persons of varying intellectual and emotional capabilities
- Avoid triggering past religious or spiritual trauma
- Be grounded in academic work with a solid theoretical foundation
- Be capable of evaluating changes in an individual’s worldview over time

Stuart Nelson, The Women’s Home collaborator and Vice President of the Institute for Spirituality and Health, thought the Meaning Systems Interview (MSI) might be the perfect tool to prompt reflection and critical thinking along these lines.

The MSI was created at UC Santa Barbara in the spring of 2012 and consists of a series of open-ended questions divided into seven sections. It was created because similar, older tools were often framed in terms of a single tradition, a narrow understanding of religion and spirituality, or an Anglo-centric perspective. While useful in some contexts, these means of evaluation are less helpful in settings like The Women’s Home. The MSI, on the other hand, is designed to cast a wide net in order to catch all of the aspects of an individual’s worldview, whether those aspects would typically be deemed religious/spiritual or not. It provides an interdisciplinary, cross-culturally stable means for evaluating religious beliefs, spiritual orientations, and/or worldviews, and in this way is accessible to the devout fundamentalist, the free thinking “none,” the “spiritual but not religious” millennial, the materialist atheist, or anyone in between.

Part II: Courage to Search Launched in Santa Barbara

When the members of the Adult Religious Education Committee—Nancy Edmundson, Paul Freeman, and Ann Taves—began thinking about ways to connect our congregation to the wider community, Ann realized that the Courage to Search program might be a means of accomplishing that. After Stuart met with the ARE team to explain the program, Paul was so inspired he immediately created a PowerPoint to highlight its potential to USSB leadership and our broader Santa Barbara community.

Nancy, Paul, and Ann coalesced around the Courage to Search project because we felt it not only embodied UU values but provided a vehicle that would allow both UUs and community members to explore their life situation and values more deeply.

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In the spring of 2019 we conducted a pilot workshop with 18 experienced USSB small group leaders. Stuart helped introduce the program to the attendees. Based on their feedback, we piloted the first complete series (a workshop with three follow-up sessions) in July 2019. We are further testing and refining our adaptation of the Courage to Search format in three sets of offerings in October 2019, and January and April 2020, before opening the series to the wider public. We hope that you will sign up to participate in January and/or April.

Part III: What is Courage to Search Santa Barbara Experience?

Courage to Search opens up space for you to examine a problem, situation, or challenge in your life that may be keeping you from moving forward. It is a facilitated group process that uses Circle of Trust methodologies and a series of questions derived from the Meaning Systems Interview.

Continued on page 8
Library Corner

Your Library Committee made it into another year, but we are still looking for that leader who will take us into our next phase. We are searching for someone who is computer savvy, so if that’s you, please let Maureen Claffey, Director of Congregational Life, know.

The library is set up each first and third Sunday of the month unless another activity has priority. Therefore, you are welcome to drop off and pick up books any time, Sunday through Thursday, when Eden Kennedy, our office manager, is in the office. She has a key to all the cabinets and has kindly agreed to help you with your selection.

Where the Heart Is, a novel by Billie Letts

It all begins when Novalee Nation, age 17, seven months pregnant and heading West in an old Plymouth, is abandoned by her good-for-nothing boyfriend, Willy Jack Pickens, in a WalMart parking lot in Sequoyah, Oklahoma. With just $7.77 in her pocket she has no one to turn to for help, and ends up living secretly in the WalMart.

Novalee gets acquainted with several caring and extremely interesting people in Sequoyah, including Forney Hull, the eccentric town librarian, who hides his secrets and his feelings behind his world of books. Novalee lives in the WalMart until the birth of her daughter, Americus, on the store’s floor makes her a temporary celebrity.

Where the Heart Is puts a human face on the lookalike trailer parks and malls of America’s small towns. It will make you believe in the strength of friendship, the goodness of down-to-earth people, and the healing power of love.


Review by Ellie Tuazon

January Outreach Offering: Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee

The mission of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee of Santa Barbara is to foster positive relationships between the many diverse groups in the Santa Barbara community and the surrounding areas; to sponsor programs and events which exemplify the teachings of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and to observe and celebrate his holiday. Among other activities in support of this mission, the committee organizes an annual essay and poetry contest for community junior high and high school students.

Dr. King’s birthday, celebrated each year on the third Monday in January, is the first national holiday to honor an individual Black American. This year, the committee has organized a full weekend of events beginning Friday January 17, and culminating Monday with a speech by the Rev. James M. Lawson, an American activist and university professor. Rev. Lawson worked with Dr. King as a leading theoretician and tactician of non-violence within the civil rights movement. He was inducted into the California Hall of Fame for his life’s work in nonviolence, social justice, and civil rights. All events are free and open to the public.

A quotation from Dr. King inspired the theme for 2020: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

Raise your voice through an Outreach Offering donation to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee of Santa Barbara.

For more information, please visit: www.mlksb.org
From the DRE
What Does Integrity Mean to You?

Integrity: the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.

I grew up in Nashville, Tennessee, in a family that was very racist. Racism was not merely taught in my family, it was a way of life. As for me, though, this way of life felt wrong. It felt unjust. As Unitarian Universalists we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person. I also believe in the inherent integrity of every person—that we are born with something inside us that keeps us true to ourselves even when others tell us we are something different. As the poet Charles Bukowski says, “Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?”

I remembered. I never conformed to the beliefs of my family and when my father pushed me on the issue when I was about eighteen years old; it led to us not speaking for more than seventeen years. Sadly, he died before we spoke again. I say sadly because I regret not ever getting to fully explain to him who I was and what I stood for. Would it have changed the way he was and how he lived? Probably not. But it would have made me stronger. It would have made me better able to stand up to others and defend and promote the moral principles that I have always lived and believed in but was too scared to talk about.

What does integrity mean to you and what are you teaching your children?

“Wholeness is never lost, it is only forgotten. Integrity rarely means that we need to add something to ourselves: it is more an undoing than a doing, a freeing ourselves from beliefs we have about who we are and ways we have been persuaded to “fix” ourselves to know who we genuinely are.”

—Rachel Naomi Remen, from "Kitchen Table Wisdom"

Focus on . . .
Membership Committee

If you are an outgoing person who enjoys talking to friends and meeting new people during coffee hour, you might already be doing the work of the Membership Ministry Committee. We welcome you to join our committee and actively use your friendly talents. Our main responsibility is to attend church regularly and greet visitors, introduce them to other members, and tell them about USSB activities they might enjoy. We meet once a month and share in hosting a monthly new member orientation, a quarterly new member half-day class, and yearly or twice-yearly new member luncheons. Participation takes three to five extra hours a month, and we enjoy working closely with Director of Congregational Life Maureen Claffey. We are also the party people who organize several congregational potlucks each year. If “community” is one of your core values, you might enjoy serving on the Membership Ministry team.

Kathleen Hogue
Director of Lifespan Religious Education
kathleen@ussb.org

Sally Hamilton, Chair
Membership Ministry Committee
Women’s Empowerment Project News

The Women’s Empowerment Fund grant is offered every year to a woman in the congregation who proposes a project to benefit women and girls in the Santa Barbara community and beyond. The WEF grant of $1,000 (plus any extra donations) will be awarded to the project selected for that year.

Starting in January, you can talk to members of the selection committee and the mentoring committee about project ideas that reflect your special interests and skills. The entire month of February will be the period when grant applications will be accepted.

The selection committee has a membership change every year, with two members going off the committee after serving their two years, another two starting their second year, and two new members beginning their two-year stint on the committee. In this way, we are able to utilize the experience of previous members and open the doors to new members at the same time.

The Women’s Empowerment Fund is happy to announce the upcoming slate of members for the 2020 Selection Committee. You can talk to any of these women about your ideas for a project for the 2020 grant.

I am always excited to work with the selection committee to encourage and review applications for the annual Women’s Empowerment Fund. We have chosen three amazing projects so far that have been of benefit to women and girls in our Santa Barbara community and beyond. I look forward eagerly to the project that will be chosen for this coming year. I am honored to present the impressive slate of 2020 selection committee members pictured below along with their personal statements of why they decided to serve.

Rachel Aarons

Meet the 2020 WEF Selection Committee

I have chosen to be part of the selection committee because I felt honored to be asked and was curious about the process. I hoped my background working in our community with girls and young women would help inform where and what the needs are. As a newbie, I hope to benefit from being on the selection committee by learning about the process and getting to know something about the presenters/candidates as well as other committee members. I also hope to come away satisfied that I was part of a process that helps girls and women find and express their power.

Becky Blake

I found my first year’s experience on the selection committee for the WEF to be very enjoyable and meaningful. The group’s consideration of last year’s applicants truly impressed me with the knowledge, experience and thoughtfulness of the committee members. I encourage future applicants, and I look forward to hearing their new ideas for making an impact for the women and girls in our Santa Barbara community.

Kate Mead
I am looking forward to participating on the 2020 WEF selection committee. I relish the opportunity to work with the other women who are on this committee, as well as to hear from and support those women in our congregation who are brave (and organized) enough to develop, present, and implement creative proposals in support of women in our greater community. The WEF has provided a platform for several wonderful, creative, and practical ideas that have been brought to fruition. What an amazing community we are!

Nancy Beisser

This is my second year to support and serve on the selection committee of the Women’s Empowerment Fund. I am a believer in the power of community and the promise of voice and agency. The efforts of the WEF speak directly to both of these concepts and I am delighted to help move this particular effort forward again this year. It is a privilege to serve with this group, and to do everything I can to make every step of the process empowering to women, whether their project is selected or not!

Nancy Edmundson

I want to support women in our congregation to be able to contribute to leading other women and girls on projects that will benefit all women. It will be meaningful to work alongside other UU women to select a project and support it knowing we will be empowering other women. Thank you for asking me to participate. I look forward to it!

Susan Dempsay

January Personal Blessings

In Appreciation of:

Mary Grimm, for your taking me under your wing when I first joined, donated by Gun Dukes
Julie Lopp, and for Julie’s creativity and can-do attitude, donated by Gun Dukes

In Celebration of the Birthday of:

Carol Sharpe, and in thanks for her beautiful singing, donated by Anonymous

In Memory of:

Karena Ryals, donated by Donnis Galvan & Peter Hale
Marianne Nelson, donated by Donnis Galvan & Peter Hale

Karena Ryals, donated by Cathy Albanese
Joanne Nay, and for her many contributions to the Women’s Group, donated by Gun Dukes
Angela Karmis, donated by Onolee Zwicke

A Personal Blessing
“Courage to Search” continued from page 3

to enable participants:
• To explore the situation in which you find yourself
• To take a close look at reality as you experience it, where it came from, and how you know it’s true
• To articulate your ultimate goals and the path toward them

The Circle of Trust approach is distinguished by principles and practices intended to create a process of shared exploration where people can find safe space to nurture personal and professional integrity and the courage to act on it.

WHAT DO PARTICIPANTS SAY

“I appreciated knowing that there is a large group of like-minded individuals seeking spiritual exploration and personal growth. Sensing the openness in the group was helpful. I truly felt it was a safe space.” —M

“I welcomed the opportunity . . . to connect with myself, connect with others, and learn new information. What an opportunity to explore ourselves spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically in a way that is different and so reflective!” —C

“Life always brings the challenge of transitions . . . Courage to Search brings a way to walk with . . . a member while they explore a way to name what is important to them and ways to evolve, to be, and work in the world.” —B

“I would suggest thinking in advance about where you are in your life and where you might wish to be. Come prepared to ‘isolate’ a situation or a challenge and work on it over the all the sessions. Courage to Search is a “deep dive,” so your degree of comfort with taking that dive is an essential ingredient in how you react to the workshop and what you ultimately get out of it.” —E

To sign up for January session or ask further questions, contact Kathleen Hogue, Director of Lifespan Education, at kathleen@ussb.org

Adapted from Stuart Nelson and Pilar Canavasio’s “Courage to Search Facilitators Guide”

USSB Perks: It’s All about the Coffee

Every Sunday, many of you line up for coffee. Behind the counter, two coffee hosts ask if you’d like “caf or decaf” and you dutifully reply. Then, you add milk, sugar, or nothing to your steaming, brown brew and sip it as you catch up with friends, discuss climate change, or browse the USSB library. But did you ever wonder where the coffee comes from or how we chose it? As the staff member in charge of our coffee host program and team, I am responsible for making sure it gets served every week. I knew a little bit about our special, sustainable coffee, but I wanted to take a deeper dive into our weekly bean provider, so I contacted Rae Tran, the co-owner of the coffee company, Karmic Circle Coffee, to find out more.

According to Tran, she started the company in 2017 to “introduce Americans to the extraordinary coffee grown in Vietnam, while improving the quality of life for the farmers who grow the country’s beans.” So, in addition to tasting warm and delicious, our Karmic Circle coffee is ethically sourced and is helping people in Vietnam. Tran also said that their company is on the cutting edge of sourcing coffee from Vietnam. She said that their coffee is “the first Vietnamese coffee to be independently assessed as specialty grade by the foremost authorities in the world: The Coffee Quality Institute, in partnership with The Specialty Coffee Association.”

In order to ensure the quality of their coffee, Tran said they visit the farmers in Vietnam once or twice a year to check on the quality they maintain. They work hard to create a coffee that is low-acid with low-bitterness, and they aim for notes of chocolate and nuttiness in the beans. All of this emphasis on ethical sourcing and quality flavor means that Karmic Circle is more expensive than a typical cup.

Our Sunday coffee service frequently runs at a loss (even though USSB’s rotating team of 10 coffee host volunteers donates the milk you drink each week). So next time you enjoy your weekly cuppa Joe, thank a coffee host for the milk and service and then dig out some change and help us cover the cost of providing us all with ethical coffee beans. Our coffee, thanks to Karmic Circle, is good and it’s good for farmers, and that’s worth supporting.

For more information, visit karmiccirclecoffee.com.

Maureen Claffey,
Director of Congregational Life
maureen@ussb.org
Alliance
Friday, January 10 at 2:00 pm in Parish Hall
Steve Ortiz, President and CEO of United Way of Santa Barbara County, and Melinda Cabrera, Director of Strategic Partnerships, will summarize the United Way programs for the USSB Alliance. Steve Ortiz is a dedicated 14-year executive of United Way; Melinda Cabrera has been overseeing United Way’s community impact programs for six years. The mission of United Way is to improve the lives of children, families, and seniors with a focus on education, financial stability, and health. Please come to listen and learn about the United Way programs in Santa Barbara County in 2020 and beyond.

Weekly Meditation Returns January 8
Every Wednesday at 5:30 pm in the Sanctuary
Find more mindfulness, or just a brief midweek timeout. After a brief introduction, we’ll have two 15-minute sitting meditation periods, with a break for people to stretch, come in, or leave. Bring your own cushion or other sitting tool, or chairs and cushions will be provided. The group is led, on a rotating basis, by Arianna Jansma, Rev. Julia Hamilton, Rev. Ken Collier, Maureen Claffey, and Nic Filzen.

Solidarity and Compassion Project
Wednesday, January 8 at 7:00 pm in Parish Hall
Join us every second Wednesday of the month when we come together to discuss ways of community healing during traumatic times and to spend time in meditation and reflection. We take on a different topic each month, with diverse guests for the panel discussion: thinkers, faith leaders, scholars, musicians, visionaries, artists, and activists share their work as we all learn how to deal with uncertainty and fear during this challenging time in our country and our world. All are welcome—no meditation experience necessary.

Monthly Vegan Potluck
Sunday, January 12 at 5:00 pm in Blake Lounge
Our USSB monthly vegan potlucks are a safe space in which to explore the pleasures of a completely plant-based meal. People with all eating styles are warmly welcomed. The commitment for participation is to contribute food that is totally plant-based, i.e., totally vegan. You are invited to share a vegan community meal and exchange ideas about plant-based eating. Please bring a plant-based, vegan dish that serves 10-12 people, and bring utensils, dishes, cups, and napkins. Email Cathy Albanese to RSVP, and for more information visit www.ussb.org/community-life/monthly-vegan-potluck.

Quantum Field Theory & Consciousness
Monday, January 20 at 7:15 pm in Blake Lounge
Beginners QFT&C meets the third Monday of the month, and gathers at 7:00 pm to start at 7:15 in Blake Lounge.

Book Discussion Group
Tuesday, January 21 at 7:00 pm in La Paz Lounge.
Contact Al Melkonian for more information.

Yoga Classes with Monica
Monday & Wednesday, 5:30 to 6:15 pm in Jefferson Hall
Open to all! This yoga is a gentle, restorative, healing experience. Focus is on holding poses, core movement, and breathing meditation, with care to protect the low back and neck. Drop in and give it a try! Cost is $13.00 a session or $65.00 for the month.

All in the Family
Elin Pratt (1928-2019)
Former USSB member Elin Pratt died on September 7 in Elk Grove, California, where she had moved to be near family as her Alzheimer’s progressed. Elin was a community activist and helped found the Santa Barbara chapter of the National Organization for Women and the UCSB Women’s Center. She was also a talented cellist, pianist, seamstress, and cook. She will be remembered fondly by many at USSB. Memories of Elin can be shared with her family, email julie.scheff@gmail.com.