



The Flaming Chalice

THEOLOGICALLY DIVERSE • RADICALLY INCLUSIVE • JUSTICE CENTERED

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church | September 2021 Newsletter



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Due to COVID19 shelter in place orders, the church office is closed until further notice.

Kelli is working from home and can still be reached via

office@starrking.org

For pastoral care, please reach out to Rev. Maria Cristina via email or phone (617)895-9267.

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SEPTEMBER 5

Labor Day

Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote - We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. Indeed, disappointment and hope coexist, but this year more than ever there is cause for hope. Join us for our annual Labor Day Sunday Service as we celebrate with poetry and music the struggle to advance our UU Values in the fight for social justice. **SPECIAL PLATE** - The Offertory this Sunday will be donated to – Faith in Action East Bay.

Service led by Bob Britton

SEPTEMBER 12

Water Ceremony: Water is Life!

We gather to give thanks for having access to drinking water, for the bodies of water near us that allow us to refresh our bodies and souls, and for our commitment to defend, care for, and honor this sacred element on which our very lives depend on. Join us virtually or in person as we bring together the waters that we have collected (from rivers, beaches, streams, or kitchen sinks) to pour into a common bowl, symbol of our Beloved Community.

Service led by Rev. Dr. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa

SEPTEMBER 19

Yom Kippur

On the Jewish Day of Atonement, we gather to reflect and pray. It is an opportunity to examine the heart, take inventory of the times when we have missed the mark, and ask for forgiveness. **"We forgive ourselves and each other. We Begin Again in Love."**

Service led by Rev. Dr. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa

SEPTEMBER 26

Courage and Compassion

Life is full of hard edges and complicated choices. Join us as we share messages of courage and compassion for life as it is. Through poetry, music, and prayer, we renew strength and ground ourselves in beauty, hope, and joy.

Service led by Rev. Dr. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa

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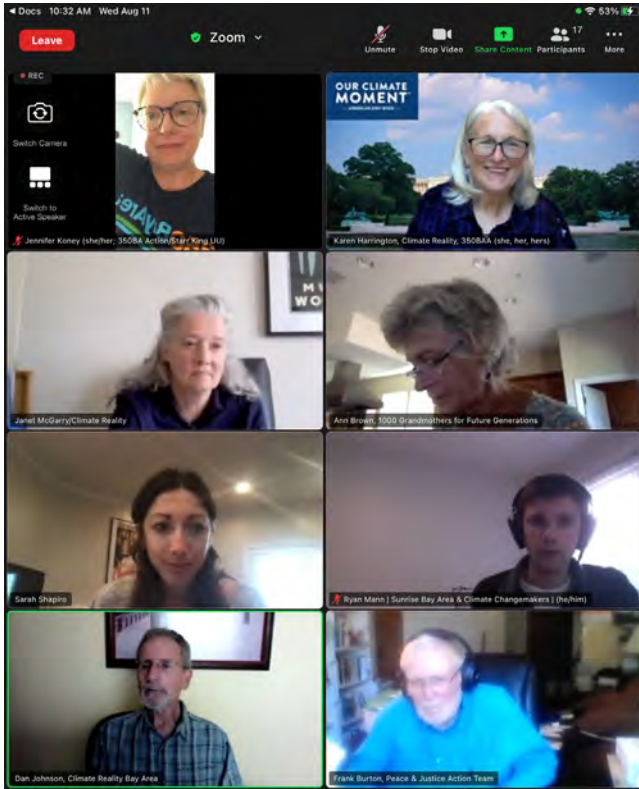
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Guest Speakers

SEPTEMBER 5

Bob Britton

HOPE – Labor Day Sunday

This lay led service on the day before Labor Day has been a tradition since 2003. Originally it focused on workers and the Labor Movement in history, song, poetry and advocacy. It has evolved in recent years to emphasize what our guest worship leader calls *Liberation Poetry*.

The truths of past Labor Day homilies persist. Most of the rest of the world still celebrates Labor Day on **May 1st** to commemorate a nationwide **American strike** for the 8-hour day in 1886. The acceleration of income and wealth inequality continues unabated. According to a recent Federal Reserve report the richest 1% possesses \$42 Trillion of the national wealth, while the entire bottom half of the nation owns only \$2.6 Trillion. In other words, the top 1% control 16 times more wealth than the bottom 50% of the population.

Still there is cause for HOPE and poetry. Young poets like Amanda Gorman celebrate and inspire activism grounded in love. Our hymnal inspires us with poets from Langston Hughes to Maya Angelou to Marge Piercy. We defeated a coup, and we persist today with people across all ages, races, faiths, sexual, gender identities and more joining together to work for justice. **Come and be inspired!**



Regathering in Person

As we prepared to return to worship in our sacred sanctuary, many people gave of their time and talent to accomplish this return. Deep gratitude for: Watching and then implementing the health recommendations to guide a safe return; washing windows, cabinets and shelves, dishes, table clothes and napkins; moving tables and chairs to allow carpet and floor cleaning; replacing couches, coffee table, coffee carts, name tags, outdoor tables and umbrellas and assembling same; creating the Children's Corner; removing trash; taking useable items to thrift stores, and caring for our outdoor space.

We owe our deepest gratitude to so many who made it possible. Each of you are invaluable and deeply appreciated - Bob Britton, Lea Casini, René Castle, Rene Castle, Roy Dickerson, Natalie Forrest, Lavon Hodges, Walt Korus, Mileva Lewis, Laurie Matthews, Shelia McClellan, Claudia McDonagh, Diane Meyerson Diane, Lorie Miller, Marilyn Mosher, Mama Lily, Beth Ogilvie, Terri Owen, Allison Prout, Jamie Prout, John Prout, Daryl Ray, Donnie Rhett, Barbara Ryan, Ethel-May Shaw, Mary Swain, Corina Vasaure, Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa, and Joanna Emerson Zinsli.



gratitude

From the Minister

GATHER THE SPIRIT August 29, 2021

Beloveds, here we have re-gathered, both in person and virtually, both just as powerful! It is so good to be together. To gather in peace, to gather in thanks, to gather in hope, to gather in strength. To gather to celebrate once again! It is so good to see you all, to see all your beautiful faces, and to see people, lovely people here with me in the sanctuary. To know that there are children playing in the playground.

On March 13, 2020, we announced that due to the COVID pandemic, we would be closing our building and conducting Sunday service via zoom. That's around 77 virtual worship services, almost the same amount of wednesday meditations, ongoing Board meetings, small group ministry virtual gatherings, with the gardeners taking care of our plants and trees every single monday without fail.

And our SoUUlful Families Ministry thrived with Lorie Miller as Family Ministry Coordinator, producing over 100 videos and developing new art and science projects on a weekly basis keeping our families connected and our children engaged. Bethany Salway created the Starr King Youth Book Club which has been a huge success, and Mama Lily and I offered weekly story time for over a year to encourage our children and youth to share their love of reading.

That's how I met Pete the Cat, the Grumpy Monkey, Liana's wolf pack, Olly's Izzy, Mireya and Nayela's Mocha & Oso, and laughed out loud with the book Monster's new undies. We've baked pan de muertos and remembered our loved ones, met Barky and Beverly, our youth created entire services dedicated to the trees and to celebrate pride, we've celebrated mothers, fathers, and all kinds of families, including our furry and four legged ones. We managed to celebrate Easter, Christmas and Pride virtually thanks to our dedicated volunteers Lea and Lavon who delivered goodie bags to everyone. We learned about Rosa Parks and Cesar Chavez, learned new songs with Linli, Mary Lou, and Liz, with Bob on the banjo and Ray on the guitar, we've learned about Mother Earth and how to be Water Protectors and are proud to be in solidarity with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band as they fight to protect their sacred land of Juristac.



From the Minister



We have honored our volunteers and expressed our deep gratitude for all who take care of this building, these grounds, and the people that make up this community. And we have invited guest speakers who have brought us important information and reaffirmed our commitment to social and climate justice. We have mourned the loss of Michelle Lovett Fink and Brian Johnson.

And we have celebrated the birth of Austin Klausmeyer and William Henry Otermat. As part of our Canvass Campaign (the most successful ever!) we planted sunflower seeds and watched as they grew and delighted in their beauty as we affirmed “Deep Hope grows here!”

As we continue to plant seeds for the earth and for the spirit, we gather to remember and to give thanks. I’m grateful that throughout this pandemic we have remained connected as a caring and loving community. I’m grateful that I have never felt alone even when it was just my mother and I in this sanctuary for months and months. I am grateful for my mother, for her faith, her prayers, and her presence in this sanctuary every Sunday lighting the candles.

I’m grateful for our leadership and all our ministries that never stopped and in fact are thriving: Family Ministry, Small Groups, worship committee, pastoral care, peace & justice, wednesday meditation, the gardening/landscaping/buildings & grounds team, music with Linli, and yes, I will include the tech team and call it a Ministry because they have been such a blessing and instrumental in making sure we remain connected. I’m grateful for all the ways we managed to show up for each other when we needed a caring presence. I’m grateful for this moment...for this breath...for each and every one of you...I hope you know how much I appreciate you...how much I love you...how present you and your loved ones are in my prayers...

We have been journeying in uncharted territory, with so much uncertainty, anxiety, fear, and yet, holding on to hope, holding on to what is life giving, holding on to love. When the days and the weeks seem to blur into each other, when the number of hospitalized people is again on the rise, when a new variant erodes the little sense of security we had managed to feel, when the health of the most vulnerable is turned into a political game... How do we return to that well of tranquility, to our source of strength, to the healing waters, to our deeply rooted hope?

From the Minister

We can begin here, together in community, whether in person or via zoom. Let us rededicate ourselves to our common goal of building the Beloved Community, and let us recognize this sanctuary as a sacred space where we are encouraged to bring our whole selves, our authentic selves.

Please join me in this rededication affirmation:

We are Unitarian Universalists with minds that think, hearts that love, and hands that are ready to serve. Together we care for our earth, and work for friendship and peace in our world.

Today, We the members and friends of Starr King congregation, rededicate ourselves to our mission and vision and express our gratitude for everyone's continued support of our community, especially during this pandemic. We covenant to do what is within our power so that we may grow in faith, compassion, and gratitude. Together, may we continue to make this community a beacon of hope and a sanctuary for all who seek freedom from dogma and injustice.

This sanctuary has been witness to the joys and sorrows of this community for decades. And although we know that the church is the people, we also recognize this building as sacred space. As such, we rededicate it to continue being a safe harbor in turbulent times, and a place of rejoicing to celebrate all of life's blessings. Amen, Ashe, and Blessed Be!



Women & Religion Virtual Retreat

New Beginnings

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 10 AM TO 4 PM ON ZOOM

Are you interested in making **NEW BEGINNINGS** with new friends and old?

The Pacific Central District Women & Religion group is hosting a fall retreat. We'll have learning sessions, affinity circles, and a keynote speech on the proposed 8th UU Principle by Paula Cole Jones. (See www.8thprincipleuu.org)

Regular registration is \$25; for women 18-35 and first timers: \$10. Scholarships are available.

To register before the September 20th deadline, go to <https://www.pcduur.org/> and click the link for the Google registration form.



Peace and Justice Action Team

Description of Who We Are: SKUUC's PJAT

We are from Starr King UU Church in Hayward and are members of the Peace & Justice Action Team. We are constituents, and embody the values of over 120 adults and youth members of our church.

We believe in:

- The interconnected web of life and that the survival of the Earth's ecosystems is directly linked to our own survival, and
- That harm to any is harm to all.

Because of this, we are compelled to take strong action to build the health of our planet and justice in our communities while joining voices with those whose values reflect our own, including the voice of future generations so they can have a say in the future that will be theirs.

In sum:

- We take action out of the greater Love that connects us to build a thriving future for all and we work to ensure that no one is left behind.

– Starr King UU Church's Peace & Justice Action Team



Bits from Your Board

SKUUC Joins Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails

In August our Board of Trustees voted unanimously to join the [Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails](#), ICJJ, part of [Faith in Action East Bay](#). At our September 5th Labor Day Sunday Service the offertory will be donated to Faith in Action East Bay.

The ICJJ was formed from a number of faith congregations and individuals of UU, Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths who came together in late 2019 in a campaign to ensure that people whose Medi-Cal benefits were lost due to their incarceration have those benefits restored upon their release from custody. Starr King members signed petitions in late 2019 with members of 11 other congregations and presented over 1100 signatures from parishioners in Alameda County imploring the Board of Supervisors to act. Rev Maria Cristina spoke to the Board when she personally presented the petitions from Starr King Church.

We soon realized that the injustices at our county jail go much deeper than the stripping away of healthcare benefits to those incarcerated. Currently over 80% of those jailed at Santa Rita have not been convicted and are awaiting trial. This number has continued to increase despite a so-called “Zero Bail” policy, as COVID has delayed or stopped trials.

According to jail statistics, 76% of Santa Rita inmates are Black or Latinx while those people of color make up only 33% of the overall county population. At the same time, nearly half of those held in custody, 44%, are mentally ill.

Santa Rita has seen 50 in-custody deaths since 2015, the highest of any local jail in California. Many of these deaths are due to negligence or inhumane treatment. Breaking with practice, the ACSO no longer announces in-custody deaths. The County has paid out more than \$27.6 million since 2015 through the end of last year to settle claims and lawsuits for excessive force and preventable in-custody deaths, more than any other police agency in the Bay Area and nearly five times as much as San Francisco (\$2.6 million) and Oakland (\$3 million) combined in the same period. (Source: [Another Suicide at Santa Rita Jail](#))

In April the U.S. Department of Justice threatened legal action against the County for cycling mentally ill people from locked wards to locked jail cells without substantive treatment, in custody or in the community. Everyday mentally ill people are arrested and held in jail for the crime of being mentally ill. (Source: [Dept of Justice Charges Alameda County with Civil Rights Violations](#))

Currently, the jail is seeing exponential increases in COVID positive testing returns despite testing only a fraction of the



Bits from Your Board

SKUUC Joins Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails

jail population. Only 24% of the current population is fully vaccinated. Since the pandemic 98 active COVID infected people have been released from custody. We urge expansion of testing and mandatory vaccination of staff. We need to ensure that those released from custody with active infections have housing and medical care.

Interested in more information? Join one of these ICJJ focus groups (contact Bob Britton bb26779@gmail.com):



Medi-Cal Restoration

Nearly 25,000 people are detained and released from custody every year. We believe many are eligible for Medi-Cal benefits, but have never applied. Others had Medi-Cal benefits when detained and lost them due to their incarceration. We are working with the Alameda County Social Services Agency on programs to ensure everyone eligible for benefits is enrolled immediately upon release from custody.

Mental Health Services and Diversion

The County continues to fund the incarceration of the mentally ill in the jail without providing adequate community-based services. Santa Rita Jail is the largest mental health treatment facility in the county. One should not have to go to jail to receive mental health services. The Superior Court has a successful program to divert the mentally ill from the judicial system that needs to be expanded to allow access for all who are eligible. In May the Board of Supervisors adopted a Care First, Jails Last resolution. We now are working to ensure the Board moves away from funding incarceration of the mentally ill to providing mental health services in the community, thus diverting the mentally ill from the jail and protecting the community. (Source: [Care First, Jails Last Resolution](#))

COVID Pandemic and Jail Crowding

When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, ICJJ was active in the movement to significantly reduce the number of persons held in Santa Rita Jail. In affiliation with Faith in Action East Bay, clergy and justice groups signed a letter communicating our concerns to the Board of Supervisors. ICJJ organized an online petition with over 3,000 signatures. Some progress was made in the reduction of the jail population, although we are now seeing these gains erode.

Bits from Your Board

SKUUC Joins Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails

At one time weekly, but now monthly conference calls occur with community and ICJJ activists, Public Health, medical, Sheriff's management, Board of Supervisor members and staff to answer questions on COVID prevention measures in the jail through testing, quarantines, and vaccinations policies. A new state public health order mandates vaccinations or weekly testing of all staff working in the jail. We urge expansion of testing and mandatory vaccinations of staff.


Support your values by supporting the ICJJ and Faith in Action East Bay.

– Board of Trustees

"I care because I want to live in a society that invests in community, not cages.

Because my tradition teaches me that everyone is created in God's image and should be treated with dignity. Because we all make mistakes, and we need to build a society that is focused on redemption, not retribution."

–Joel Gerwein, ICJJ activist



ICJJ
INTERFAITH COALITION
FOR JUSTICE IN OUR JAILS

Protect Juristac

Five church members join a rally in San Benito County to protest the latest incursion into Juristac, the sacred grounds of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band

On August 20, 5 people from our church (Rene G Castle, Lea Casini, Darryl Ray, Darryl's daughter Thana Ray, and Beth Ogilvie) participated in a rally in San Benito County to protest a new development in Juristac.

San Benito County voters rejected a development proposed at this location during a referendum in 2020, but legal loopholes allowed construction activities to move ahead anyway without environmental review or tribal consultation. This area is ecologically sensitive and culturally and spiritually significant. The tribe has requested and received an injunction stopping the work. The protest helped raise the visibility of the issue and its importance.

[Facebook announcement of the event with some background](#)

[Article in BenitoLink about the protest](#)

– Beth Ogilvie

Photo by Alexis Macnab



SoUllful Family Ministry

August Highlights

Super Star Scientist Summer Camp

Super Star Scientist "I salute you!!!!" What fun we had this summer. I am so proud of our scientist. We learned about chemical reactions, magnetic forces, string can carry voices, erupting volcanoes, air pressure, water solubility, solar cooking and more. Plus our scientist earned 12 badges!!!! Great job my friends.

Happy Heart Circle Time

This month we explored our imagination. Chairs can become a car, a magic feather can take you on adventures and make people smile. We were TV stars or zoom teachers, and got creative with our imagination with simply drawing a "dot." We continually explore our feelings. Asking ourselves, "What is our Heart is telling us?" We added two more feelings to our list, joyful and excitement.

Gratitude

Lavon & Lea: Thank you for your deliveries

Thanks,

-Lorene Miller



Ongoing Activities

All in-person activities done virtually or on hold until further notice.
Please check the website at starrking.org for updates.

Evening Meditation	Every Wednesday, 7:00–8:30pm on Zoom. Open to all. Contact: Diane Meyerson
Small Group Ministry	Contact sgm@starrking.org for more information.
Board Meeting	First Thursday of the month, 7–9pm on Zoom. Open to all. Contact: Roy Dickerson
Peace and Justice Action Team	Usually the second Sunday of the month after worship but not always, so check the church calendar and the announcements email to confirm.
Family Storytime	(On hold) Every Monday 6:30pm on Zoom. Contact: Dr. Rev. María Cristina
Adult RE	(On hold) Second Tuesday of the Month from 11–12 noon on Zoom Contact: Mileva Saulo Lewis
Choir Practice	(On hold) Meets every Sunday from 9–10:15am in the Fellowship Hall. Contact: Lea Casini



September Birthdays

September 2
Mary Lasack

September 11
Marilyn Mosher

September 18
Rev. Maria Cristina

September 4
Mama Lily

September 14
Kirk Smith

September 19
Corina Vasaure

September 9
Ruth DeSmidt

September 15
Terri Owen

September 29
Donnie Rett