Upcoming Worship Services

Services at 10:30 a.m.

Until we can safely meet together in Fellowship Hall, our Worship Services and meetings are on Zoom. Please check your ENews for zoom links, Meeting IDs and passwords, and updates.

May 3: May Day!
Lay-led celebration
May Day has several associations—a nature-associated spring holiday, International Workers’ Day and the world-wide call for help for ships at sea. We will weave all these themes together with readings and music, to celebrate our community, our labors, and our support of each other through this new season.

May 10: Becoming Mama: Experiences in Motherhood Across Gender
Ira X Armstrong (they/them), Lay Worship Leader
The original Mother’s Day was created as a war protest. This Mother’s Day, please join Ira X Armstrong and Johanna Holden as they explore gender, motherhood, and the power of mamas and their allies and accomplices to unite in solidarity towards a world that values the life of all beings and of the earth.

May 17: Know What You Want
Rev. Marsh Agobert (he/him), Worship Leader
If you look at it carefully, you will find that more people can tell you what they don’t want much more clearly than they know what they do want. Well, isn’t that OK, non-attachment, and all? Wanting things might be the seat of greed. Some of the best advice I can proffer would be to become curious about this.

May 24: When Truth Walks the Plank: Covid 19 and Captain Crozier
Rev. Dr. Carrie Knowles (she/her), Worship Leader
Rev. Dr. Carrie Knowles considers the fate of the messenger of bad news when sailors face the pandemic that came on board the USS Theodore Roosevelt. Their story brings to the fore the concerns with the widening spread of the coronavirus through the military and the lagging response.

May 31: The Journey of 1,000 Miles Begins with One Step
Barbara Brust (she/her), Guest Speaker
The COVID-19 virus has upended many of our lives, and especially those of our unhoused friends. Barbara Brust from Consider The Homeless! brings us up to date on what is going on in the homeless community and what steps we can take now to help all of us on our journey together.
Cleric's Corner

The Will of the People

This article will look at the idea of “The will of The People” and “Power to the People.”

What does this mean to you? What does it do and what can it do?

What has become of these ideas? Were they good ideas then or now? In a world that changes at the current rate, how can we know what, in practice, is in our best interest? One might answer that with an idea, and that idea might sound like a valid concept and yet may not fit the world as it is. Meanwhile, an idea that seems at first glance to be a bad one may work toward a better end. I’ve taken one guiding perspective from Mao Tse Tung’s Redbook, which states clearly: “Practice, theory, practice. Not theory, practice, theory.”

Once upon a time, the phrase “Power to the People” was ubiquitous. The saying meant to express the idea that what the people wanted or perhaps what they needed should be law or at least the first concern of the law. At a glance, this seems to be a no brainer.

Many autocrats believe that “The People” don’t know what is best for them. Therefore they assume control and dole out what they see as best. By doing so, they relieve The People of weighty responsibilities. One philosopher to address this was Lao Tze, the author of the Tao Te Ching, of which we’ve spoken. I’m not going to provide the specific chapter and verse from the Tao Te’ Ching for the current topic. The gist of his counsel says: “Empty the mind(s) (of the people), fill (their) belly, and the realm will dwell in peace and harmony.” The results in the dialectic of Chinese thought, to which “the old boy”¹ made a huge contribution, can be seen in current-day China. Empty the minds and fill the bellies may seem like some dictators’ dream, yet look at how fast the standard of living in China has risen. We know that the cultural revolution exhibited this phase of emptying the mind of China of its intellectual recalcitrance through the long and painful process of re-education. Cambodia would later engage in a similar process by eliminating (exterminating?) the “intellectual elite.” One step that seems hard to deny in terms of China (bearing in mind that causality is a complicated proof) was a rapid and sustained increase in the

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¹. was a significant
overall health of the nation. China’s Barefoot Doctors set the cornerstone for the tremendous rise in health that has led to the economic power of current-day China.\textsuperscript{2} Admittedly I have not yet fully grasped the intricacies of this causal chain, though I believe such exists. I am convinced that the general health-first-wealth-second reform has worked, even as demonstrated by an economist like Dr. Hans Rosling.

What has this got to do with “the Will of the People being the law?” Maybe it means that we can’t assume to know the will of the people if we start by thinking we already know that answer. What would it mean in America to “empty the minds” while filling the bellies? Do we know what the latter means? How can we seek to understand the will of a stupendously diverse people like Americans? Maybe it’s pointing us toward some organic wisdom that a healthy community tends, intrinsically, toward becoming creative and productive. Practice first, which in turn will divine a theory.

Currently, there is a burgeoning middle class that continues to grow across the planet.

Rev. Marsh

\textsuperscript{2} I highly recommend you experience this whole presentation by Hans Rosling. If you’re short on time, start the segment that begins @ minute 3:00 of the talk.

\section*{From the Committee On Ministry}

BFUU is very excited to inform the congregation about the newly formed Committee on Ministry (COM). This process was started several months ago and we have had many meetings between our ministers and the three of us who make up the committee; Laura Knipmeyer, Jinky Gardner, and Kathy Riehle.

We have also researched and sought information from the UUA, as well our local sister Unitarian Universalist congregations, so that our form of the committee can serve the needs of our small congregation, enhancing both awareness of the services provided by our ministries and the many opportunities for all to engage in ministerial activities. The committee has formed and put in place a Charter and a Covenant. Our Community Minister, Rev. Tom McAninley, and our Parish Ministers, Rev. Marsh and Rev. Carrie, are excited about the formation of this committee.

We will be working between the congregation and the ministers and vice versa. We will be responsible for, among other things:

- Ministerial review process to assess the shared ministry of the congregation and its ministers
- Annual Meeting Reports
- COM brochure outlining its function and availability
- High committee visibility in all aspects of the congregation’s life

The committee will consist of three (3) members, with a term membership of three (3) years with a rotating turnover of one (1) member each year. Nominees may not hold any other executive positions, such as Board of Trustees.

This was presented to the Board and we gained their approval. This will also be presented to the congregation at the next Annual Congregational meeting.

Any questions about the committee or its function are welcome; please feel free to contact Laura, Jinky, or Kathy.

Namaste, Kathy Riehle
Happy Spring!

As we continue to be under Stay-At-Home and social distancing orders, it occurs to me that many of us are under such stress and fear that it may be difficult to appreciate the springtime. But as I write this, I have Rev Marsh’s April 19th sermon on gratitude in my mind and on my heart. And just as our principles tell us that we embrace the inherent worth and dignity of every human being, our 7th principle reminds us to live in “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

Reaching even deeper into our 6 sources, we see that our 1st source is to seek “Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life” and our 6th source asks us to mind the “spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.”

So we as Unitarian Universalists are invited to align ourselves in our principles and sources, despite our fears and worries and difficulties in the world. And we ground in these things not to avoid the realities of our conditions, but to follow the teachings of humanists who engage in faith-based direct action.

The song for this month is one I grew up with, and I am so grateful to my parents and their UU community for making this their love song to the children.

The meditation is one that I use to learn and relearn a meditation practice that doesn’t rely on a God or god. Although I do have a belief in God and gods, it is not a requirement or arrival place to practice meditation.

And our reading for the month is a reminder that we have the tools to disrupt the ways that white supremacy and rape patriarchy are alive in this world. As we confront the realities of the pandemic, impacted folks, especially Black and indigenous folks and refugees, as well as LGBTQ spectrum folks, disabled folks, fat folks and elders are still the most likely to be affected by the disease and be discriminated against and not receive adequate treatment.

While we are confronting the harsh realities of the world we live in, let us also remember to live and ground in the beautiful realities. In the nests that are everywhere bursting with life. In the flowers peeping up through every crack, and the bees gorging themselves on pollen and nectar. In the coyotes howling at the water in San Francisco. In the very breath we have in this moment. Remember we are not ever guaranteed another breath; in fact the only guarantee is that someday our breath will cease. What will we do in the meantime with this ‘one, precious life’?

Ira X
“Music Video Project Adventures With the Choir”

One of the challenges during the current coronavirus shelter-in-place order is to figure out how to have the choir sing together. As I scan through the postings of the Association for Unitarian Universalists Music Ministries (AUumm), I see that it’s a problem that Music Directors are grappling with in congregations across the country.

We have been holding choir practices as Zoom meetings at BFUU, and at our first meeting, we decided to experiment with singing together with all of our mics unmuted, just to see how it sounded.

“Here we go! ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb’ on three—one, two, three!” I announced.

A cacophony of voices erupted, sound blaring in and out, and no one singing in time with anyone else. After the din died down and there was a moment of silence, someone in the choir piped up to say something I had been trying to hold back.

“That sounded TERRIBLE!”

It sure did. The problem with Zoom and group singing is that there is a lag time between when someone says something into their mic and when other people hear it in their homes. You can make up for the timing issue a bit when a second singer starts their part a split second before they hear the first singer ending their part. However, everyone’s internet speed varies slightly depending on multiple factors, so singing together as a group is basically impossible.

Since I have a lot of experience making music videos for my own music projects, I thought we could give it a go and see if it would work to create a music video with BFUU Choir members. The first trial was for a song I wrote, “With This Song” inspired by how we can send healing and love by singing to each other over the phone. For that, I had individual members come to a Zoom meeting, and I recorded each using Zoom while they listened and sang along with a “guide track” I had prepared for each singing part.

Well, let me tell you that it was a lot more work than I had anticipated. Part of it was overcoming the singers’ technological challenges coupled with high levels of anxiety that is very common when venturing into new tech ground. The other was the unexpected amount of time needed to coach folks on their parts. More than one participant joined the Zoom room telling me confidently “Oh, I got it!” when I asked them if they’d practiced.

“OK, go ahead, I’m recording,” I would say.

A few seconds later, I would have to stop them and say, “OK, well, so you actually don’t got it. So let’s go over and practice the part first a few times…”

So, that laborious element of my needing to coach and record each singer one by one, together with the low recording quality you get on Zoom motivated me to try a different tack.

For the next project, the song “In These Hard Times,” written by Linda Hirschhorn, we first thoroughly practiced each part in the Zoom room during choir practice. It was very helpful to use breakout rooms to get together in sections (tenors in one room, basses in another, etc.), and Andy helped me coach the singers on the different parts.

It was really fun to say, “OK, go to your rooms!” after assigning folks to breakout rooms, and off they would go, disappearing from the Main Room into the mysterious ether of the Zoom nebula to their respective breakout rooms.

Second, Andy helped by playing each part on the piano, which I recorded and later edited and replicated so that it was played the right number of times through. Then I sent the “guide tracks” to singers with detailed instructions on how to sing while videotaping themselves on their phone cameras and listening to the guide tracks through a headset on another device so the sound wouldn’t get picked up by the camera.

Huge kudos to Dominic Jeffries, for patiently helping an extremely tech-challenged singer to do this and share his video with me on Google Drive. I couldn’t lend a hand as much with the tech challenges this time because I had to drive to Southern California because my sister wasn’t feeling well, and I needed to go help my brother care for my elderly mom.

So I could hardly believe my eyes and ears when I saw the clips sent to me! Janet Stephens, Jeff and Margaret, Tom R., and Dominic all sent me clips—with the timing and word changes done just right! The sound and video quality from the phone cameras was a big improvement over recording within Zoom as well. These I put together adding in my own clip, and presented it at the Sunday service on April 19, 2020. The lyrics about how there is still singing, dancing, and praying during these hard times, seemed so appropriate for the service with its theme on “Gratitude.”
It’s Sunday morning at BFUU. The Worship Team is eager and energized. Rev. Carrie, wearing a floral jacket, reviews her sermon notes. Ira X Armstrong, Board President, prepares to lead a musical number while Doug Chambers, Board Vice President, tunes his banjo. James Blanchard practices the Time for All Ages. Dr. Susan plays softly on her harp, and Tom Rudderow and Andy Jamieson do the same on the guitar and piano.

Another normal worship service is beginning, right? Well, half right! A worship service is indeed about to begin. But none of the participants are gathered in Fellowship Hall. This Is Sunday, April 22! It’s five days after East Bay residents were ordered to “shelter in place” to avoid the spread of the coronavirus. All ten members of the Worship Team are launching into an online service from the safety of their respective homes by Zoom video conferencing technology.

This service marked a challenging leap into a new way of presenting BFUU worship services. Dr. Susan T. Mashiyama, the Music Director, responded to requests from congregants as well as members of the Worship Services Committee (WSC) and Board for worship services to continue by using the Internet. Part of her job is to provide A/V tech support as needed and her tech and organizational skills were much needed during this challenging time.

Dr. Susan, who continues as a team leader on this task collaborating closely with WSC chair Joanna Foley, whose “people whisperer” skills are as important as technical skills, says she feels so proud of the way we all worked together as a team, including our wonderful office staff, to surmount the non-trivial challenges of making Internet services happen. While many large churches were forced to cancel services for several weeks during this time, the small but mighty BFUU has not skipped a single Sunday service.

For the March 22 service that began our Zoom odyssey, Doug and Tom both recommended a full rehearsal beforehand to keep all participants on the same page. Chaos sometimes ensued during the two-hour rehearsal, so boy, was it needed! It helped make the Zoom service on Sunday look deceptively simple and easy to do. Ira and Paikea Melcher, a bright and energetic millennial young woman, served as Zoom Co-hosts along with Dr. Susan. Tom Rudderow performed an original composition. Forty-five households sought admission to the Zoom room that Sunday. And the rest, as they say, is history!

Now five services have been presented by Zoom—all with the variety and creativity for which BFUU services are known. Snapshots of some highlights:

* Inspiring sermons by our ministers: Rev. Dr. Carrie focusing on love and Rev. Marsh speaking on gratitude.
* Uplifting messages from seminarian Joe Gabaeff about sacred loss and lay leader Jeff Palmer about resurrection.
* Soul stirring music by vocal activists Melanie DeMore and Evelie Delfino Sâles Posch, spiritual musicians extraordinaire.
* Original musical compositions by Tom and Dr. Susan, and video projects organized by Dr. Susan that allowed us to hear the choir sing together.
* Readings from the Numinous Tarot and the words of UU Rev. Dr. Lynn Ungar and the International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers.

What contributes to the success of these online services? According to Dr. Susan, the willingness of members to try new things combined with the strong motivation to find a way to connect is a big factor. “The choir rehearses by Zoom now,” she says, “and it was inspiring how we helped each other to coach older (and some not-so-old) members to brave the challenge of bringing themselves up to speed on using
Zoom.” She also commented that she thought it was a brilliant idea of Ira’s to use Zoom, since now we are well prepared to use this technology in our congregational meetings and for various other meetings such as music get-togethers and games nights organized by MusC chair Margaret Hurlbert and her husband, Board member Jeff Palmer.

Knowing that other faith communities are successfully meeting the same challenges is inspiring, according to Joanna. “From temples to mosques to synagogues, congregations are finding ways to put forth what is most sacred and precious in their worship services.”

In response to feedback from the choir and other congregants, the worship services are held as private Zoom meetings and portions of the services are made available to the public only after ensuring they do not contain embarrassing or private moments that were meant to be shared only with our congregation, or copyright-protected material. This allows our services to be safer, warmer, more free, and yes, more special. As our Vice President Doug puts it so well, if you want to experience all the extra special moments of our worship services, then “just come and join us.”

The mission of the WSC is to maintain quality services for BFUU at a time when spiritual encouragement and a sense of community support are most needed. As our Covenant says, “Let love be the spirit of this congregation and service its goal. This is our living covenant to dwell together in peace, to seek the truths in life and to help one another.” Dolores Helman expressed deep gratitude for these services, and also commented with her usual intrepid humor, “Besides, what the hell else are we going to do?” Worship Service titles, leaders, descriptions, audio, video, orders of service, and/or texts (as available) are on our website at http://bfuu.org/worship-service/past-services.

Worship Service Team March 22: clockwise from lower left: James, Ira, Paika, Rev. Dr. Carrie Knowles, Doug, Andy, Dr. Susan

Worship Service Team March 29: clockwise from upper left: Johanna & Ira, Graham, Andy, Tom R., Doug & Kathy, Melanie DeMore

Worship Service Team April 5: clockwise from lower left: Joanna, Gene, Elinor, Joe Gabaeff, Christine L., Dr. Susan, Tom R.

Worship Service Team April 12: main left: Jeff Palmer, left to right, top: James, Kathy & Doug; center: Dominic, Christine D., Joanna; bottom: Tom R.

Worship Service Team April 19: left: Doug, Dominic, Rev. Marsh; middle: Evelie Delfino Sãles Posch, Joanna, Janet; right: James, Dr. Susan, Andy
Joanna has shared this photo of her delicious chocolate chip banana muffins - an example of what she’s been doing during the shelter in place. Please share your photos with newsletter@bfuu.org!

Looking Up!

The bright star-like object seen in the evening western sky after sunset is the planet Venus. Venus has phases like the moon, and it gets closer to Earth as it orbits around the sun. It not only appears larger but it takes on an increasingly crescent shape like the waning moon. A good pair of well supported binoculars will show the changing phases over the next few weeks. Have a look.

Spring Has Sprung!

as these photos of the garden prove. It’s a good thing plants are not required to do social distancing!
meeting new friends

As I meandered down
the sloping pathways of grey and black
each corner turned was hairpin and steep
the sun was up
the sky was blue
fawn and doe chewed on new buds of spring

Wild carrot blossoms rose higher than I
miner’s lettuce, wild onions and tiny yellow flowers
poked through grasses
waiting for little fingers to pick them
for an afternoon’s salad
the sound of a stream’s hidden trickle flowed
beside me as my companion

by Christine Dickson

Our lives invent darkness:
Python lovingly strokes
Itself across our shoulders;
Cobra spreads its hood.
And yet the same space
holds songs and tears
laughter and caring.

We have met ourselves in a night
that seems moonless
starless- — -Or have our voices
gathered the momentum of our lives
while our bodies heal, rest
generate futures?

Frances Hillyard,
acting BFUU Poet Laureate
The view from my office has changed, as has yours, no doubt. I’m typing this from my home studio/office, but using the computer equipment from our BFUU office. The perspective is changing, daily. I’m glad to be of service and to be part of the incredibly persistent and wholehearted staff of our Fellowship. An upside of everyone sheltering-in-place is that Ed Keating, our Building Manager, has been able to start work on the solar panel installation! The contract with the installer was signed over a month ago and the project is in the design stage. The delivery of batteries & other parts is being worked out as well as making space for them behind the stage in the Hall. Normally we would schedule this work for the week around Labor Day, when New School is out of session. Even then, we’d have to take into consideration all the regularly scheduled events in each building. Without that set of considerations, he can go ahead and get it done, we hope by the end of the SIP order. What good timing that the Board approved the expense in February! And great gratitude for all those who contributed to the Solar Fund. Over time, we’re going to reap benefits from this, as well as add to our green footprint.

Ed is also on the grounds pretty regularly, helping the staff with getting the mail and taking care of one-person projects.

On a personal note, the 8th Annual Berkeley Dulcimer Gathering, which was going to be held at BFUU for the 2nd year, is moving online. I’m pretty excited about creating the first ever online dulcimer festival and have gotten interest from Maryland to Japan, Oregon to Florida. Of course, we’ll miss hugging all our dulcimer friends and hearing the sound of each unique instrument, but it’s a blessing to be able to go forward instead of cancelling altogether. And there’s a public online concert Friday night, 5/15, 6pm PDT. Check it out at https://www.berkeleydulcimergathering.com/

May this time of sequestering allow you some personal reflection, creative expression, and energy to do the spring cleaning at home.

All the best,
Deborah Hamouris
Event Space Coordinator

Regular Committee Meetings (via Zoom through Shelter In Place)

**Aesthetics** (subcom. of B&G)
Meet as needed
contact Joanna Foley

**Buildings & Grounds (B&G)**
Meet once per month,
contact Ben Burch or Abbot Foote

**Caring**
4th Sunday at 12:30 PM
contact Kathy Riehle

**Committee on Ministry**
meets as needed
contact Laura Knipmeyer

**Finance**
Meet as needed
contact Ben Burch or Abbot Foote

**Hospitality**
4th Sunday at 12:30 PM
contact Kathy Riehle
or Elinor Roberts

**Membership**
4th Sunday at 12:30 PM
contact Doug Chambers

**Music**
2nd Monday 2:00 PM
contact Margaret Hurlbert

**Personnel**
3rd Thursdays 2:30 PM
Contact Kathy Riehle

**Poetry**
Meet as needed
contact Frances Hilyard

**Religious Education**
Meet as needed
contact Sharon Colligan

**Social Justice (SJC)**
3rd Sunday 12:30 PM
contact Phoebe Sorgen

**Worship Services**
2nd Tuesday at 10:00 AM
contact Joanna Foley
**Please note:** The Aesthetics Subcommittee, the Uke Jam, and the Hardly Strictly Acoustic Jam are on hiatus while we are under Shelter in Place Orders. When regular meetings resume, we’ll send an update via ENews.

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* denotes Fellowship event
Building character, enriching spirits, promoting community, and serving humankind through spiritual growth and social action.

BFUU OFFICE HOURS
Monday - Friday: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

BFUU OFFICE STAFF
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SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR JUNE COMMUNICATOR: May 20
Please email newsletter@bfuu.org with submissions.

Address Correction Requested
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