

Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis (UUCD)  
Theme Journal –February, God



## Finding God

Laura Thompson, Intern & Campus Minister

I was two weeks into my new position when my first patient died. I had been by her bedside the day before her death; it was a Friday. I brushed her hair and read scripture to her. I didn't know much about her, she was nonverbal by the time I met her. But, I had been told that she was a devout Christian and that she loved to spend time in the sun. She was showing signs that death was very near. I went home knowing that I would be called in over the weekend to do a bedside memorial for her, as it was the custom for any resident who died. It gave the staff who had spent so many years caring for her time to honor their grief.

I had a tough time sleeping, eating or doing much of anything as I anticipated that call. I was terrified: of how it would feel to be with her body when she was gone; terrified of touching death; terrified of saying the wrong thing or worse, not being able to say anything at all. The call came and I drove through the dark clouds and rain to get there, still scared.

Shinkwang was a fellow chaplain intern; he met me there. He was afraid too. We went up to the room and saw her. Her son was there. We offered our condolences and Shinkwang asked if we could pray for her. The son nodded. We knelt on the floor by her bed and laced our hands on her body. The floor was cold; her body was cold. Shinkwang prayed quietly, in Korean. I don't know what he said, but it felt as though he was praying for me, too.

We left the room and gathered candles and oil for the bedside memorial. Staff and family gathered around. I stood in the front of the room, beside her, still scared. Shinkwang stood in the back. I looked to him and he nodded and then lowered his head in prayer. And then things changed.

A feeling overtook me... a presence. It was the presence of everyone that had ever loved this woman as well as all of those that she had loved. It washed over me. And there was more. I also felt the presence of everyone who had ever loved me and all of those whom I had loved. I took a deep breath. I was still a bit afraid, but this overwhelming feeling of love let me know that I was not alone. I anointed her body and we said goodbye.

When I left a few hours later the rain had stopped and the clouds had broken up. As I walked out the door the sun shone down upon my face. I stopped to feel it's warmth upon me and then felt too her presence join with mine.

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# Looking for God

Rev. Beth Banks

I was student teaching a high school psychology class in Spokane, Washington. My supervising teacher had given me the green light to try all kinds of unconventional teaching methods. I had the time of my life.

At some time in the school year, I must have mentioned the word Unitarian. As luck would have it, the UU minister's son was in my class, and the congregation was looking for a youth director. It was a little bit like finding a cool pet and bringing it home, asking, "Dad. Can we keep her?" This became the first leadership position I held in a Unitarian Universalist congregation. They "kept" me as the youth director, for about six years, and I became their Religious Education Director for several more. This was the church that helped me imagine ministry as a way of life. The UU minister was none other than The Rev. Bill Houff, a scientist who became a social activist and mystic.

The UU congregation purchased a Victorian mansion as their church, and it was lavish, with woven fabric wallpaper, high arching ceilings and a shining carved wooden staircases circling into a grand entry ballroom. By the time I joined the congregation, a new worship space was built, and Religious Education was held throughout the spectacular mansion. *(For several years I lived in the butler and maid quarters on the third floor of the Glover Mansion, but that's another story.)*

For all the grandeur of the mansion, our youth group loved the cellar, with its crawl spaces and dank air. At least they loved it for the month of October we designed a haunted house for Halloween and guided petrified children through dozens of dark rooms dripping with cobwebs – real webs with real spiders. The haunted house was our biggest fundraiser of the year. And it led to a chance to experience God. No, not in the cellar of an 1888 mansion, but in ways I'll tell you more about at worship on Sunday, February 7 at 9:30 and 11:15am.



**Reflect**     **The Committee on Ministry** (Lucas Frerichs, Stefan Harvey, Hiram Jackson, Lisa Oakes, Susan Steinbach, Karen Urbano) invites you to make the theme part of your spiritual practice:

*Wherever you are is home / And the earth is paradise / Wherever you set your feet is holy land / You don't live off it like a parasite / You live in it, and it in you, / Or you don't survive / And that is the only worship of God there is.*

By Wilfred Pelletier and Ted Poole in *Earth Prayers from Around the World*

According to much scientific evidence, if all of life is material and natural, how can we reconcile this with a belief in a supernatural existence? Where do you fall on the spectrum of belief or non-belief?

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**Listen**     Download or stream edited Sunday services at [www.uudavispodcast.org](http://www.uudavispodcast.org)

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## Sunday Worship

**February 7, 9:30 & 11:15am**, *Looking for God*, Rev. Beth Banks. First Sunday Intergenerational Format at 11:15am with a New Member Ceremony. For many years, the word God held no meaning for me. Long before the thought of seminary ever crossed my mind, I had an experience. It had all the earmarks of the mystical journey, including arduous excursion that went to the edge of endurance and circled back to comfort. There were smells and bells and many invisible things. The story's ending, that became a new beginning, was this, "I stepped out onto the bridge . . ." At the end of the service, you may have your own story to tell.

**Read** *Hide-And-Seek With God* stories by Mary Ann Moore. 30+ brief stories that invite discussion and interaction with children. We'll use the opening story as a First Sunday skit at the 11:15am service February 7.

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**February 14, 11:15am ONLY**, *The Arc of Justice*. Rev. Beth Banks, Laura Thompson, Intern & Campus Minister. Saturday we'll do service projects throughout Yolo County and come together for an all ages dinner. Sunday is the culmination of our energy in a worship celebration. Sparks Choir will get us moving, we'll see photos of every generation in action across our region, and we'll gather for a quilt blessing. Come feel the love this Valentine's Day!



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**February 21, 9:30 & 11:15am**, *Wrestling with "God"*, Rev. Kevin Tarsa; Laura Thompson, Worship Associate. What's a non-theist religious naturalist to do with the concept of God? For that matter, what's any of us to do with the idea of God these days? Come, continue to explore this month's theme and your own thoughts and feelings.  
★ You are invited to send a sentence or two or a short paragraph expressing your thoughts about "God" to [campusministry@uodavis.org](mailto:campusministry@uodavis.org) by February 14. Rev. Tarsa will draw on your responses to prepare the service. *Rev. Kevin Tarsa serves the UU Fellowship of Beaufort, SC as Interim Minister. He is one of eight children, a lifelong church musician, a religious naturalist, and a graduate of Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago. A native of Michigan, Rev. Tarsa is enjoying the warm South Carolina winter and the chance to harvest kale and plant snow peas in January.*

**Music:** Virginia Thigpen, Sandy Westfall, and Ellen Coppock play flute, concertina, and harp.

**Special Collection: Myanmar Children's Foundation**, [myanmarchildrensfoundation.org](http://myanmarchildrensfoundation.org) Make checks out to UUCD, memo MCF. *We seek to cultivate the future leaders and professionals, to break the country's cycle of poverty and contribute to its lasting peace and development with educational opportunities for disadvantaged children. We work with orphanages, schools, parents and communities to help them to build a sustainable financial foundation that relies on innovative projects and community support, rather than foreign donors. We maximize our impact by looking to the long term.*

Third Sundays are **SUUPER Sundays!** Join us after worship for soup and programming for all ages. [re@uodavis.org](mailto:re@uodavis.org)

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**February 28, 9:30 & 11:15am**, *Educate Yourself*, UNIQUE High School Youth. A perspective on school VS education. How well does school prepare you? Where do you learn the most important lessons?

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# Naming

**Adrean Dills, Interim Director of Lifespan Learning**

Throughout the centuries, humanity has claimed ownership of the divine through naming. These names become proprietary, exclusive, definitive—and the more they do, the more contentious people become. Unitarian Universalists try something a little different: We come together in our disagreements about God. How radical!

Does God exist? Is divinity plural? Should we define god by what we don't know, the sacred, or what we experience? How can I reconcile my disbelief with others' belief? Good questions all! Happy journey!

- ♦ Our **Diving Deep** opportunity this month will be an exciting two-part workshop facilitated by John Ashby. The workshop, entitled **God is Dead, Long Live the Gods**, meets 1-3pm, February 14 & 21. Details: [re@uudavis.org](mailto:re@uudavis.org)
- ♦ To explore our UU Christian roots, please stop by the **Liberal Christianity Group** (3rd Wednesdays, Library, 7pm) where we look for God in the life and work of Jesus. Even here is tension between *God as Mystery* and *God as Love*.
- ♦ Intern Minister, Laura Thompson, leads a 7 session **Build Your Own Theology** class in March and April. RSVP by March 1 so we can make a good headcount. [re@uudavis.org](mailto:re@uudavis.org)
- ♦ If you want to look at God in nondual theology, the **UU Mystics in Community** host a variety of meetings here. Please email Jack Whitsett ([jack42@pobox.com](mailto:jack42@pobox.com)) for details.



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## Social Justice, the Divine and God

UUs have many ways of naming what is sacred. Some believe in a God; some don't believe in a God. Some believe in a sacred force at work in the world and call it "love," "mystery," "source of all," or "spirit of life." Rather than a shared concept of the divine, we gather to know and be known, to comfort and be comforted.

In December a group from our church gathered with individuals from two other UU churches in our region to spend an hour writing holiday cards to immigrants detained at the Rio Cosumnes Detention Center. The card writing was an activity of Faithful Friends-Amigos Fieles, a visitation program a handful of us participate in. Our cards were among more than 300 mailed.

After Christmas, one of the UU Faithful Friends visitors went to Rio Cosumnes and learned there had been much discussion about the cards among the immigrants. She was told, "...everyone was happy, and surprised, to get the Christmas cards...some of the men did not know Faithful Friends and were confused about how we knew their names and that they were there...the cards were the only indication that it was Christmas...there wasn't any special meal or anything, just another day..."

Hearing the joy the cards generated was one of those experiences confirming life is richer in community. We UUs gathered together to send cheer, and also provided comfort: recognition of a holiday otherwise unacknowledged.

Are acts of social action a way to acknowledge the divine, a way to celebrate the mystery that binds us, each to all? We invite you to explore these questions as we work with our February theme, God.

Reflect on URJ's proposal to place a *Black Lives Matter* banner on church grounds; read all you can in preparation for the March 13 congregational meeting. Participate in *Living our faith by bending the arc towards justice/YOU ARE UUCD!, A Day of Social Justice Service*: one project builds on the success described above; details about all offerings on the next page.

**You Are Invited To a Day of Social Justice Service, Feb. 13, 2016**

**Living our faith by bending the arc towards justice / YOU ARE UUCD!**



The Board of Trustees, the Committee on Ministry and the Social Justice Coordinating Committee are sponsoring these opportunities to get to know others in our church community, work on our social justice priorities, and have fun.

**We hope you will participate in one of the projects below AND attend the all church dinner.**

#### **Bending the Arc: Morning Projects**

**Yolo Basin Foundation** *pre-Duck Days Festival clean-up.* 9am-noon, Yolo Basin HQ, 4521 I Chiles Road, Davis. Families with teens 16+ years, young adults, adults (Maximum of 10)

**Sacramento Make A Wish Foundation** *Design cards of good wishes for children.* 9:30-11:30am, UUCD library. Families with children of all ages.

**Cool Davis:** Train to be a “tabler.” 10am-noon, Cool Davis booth at Davis Farmer’s Market. Senior high students, young adults & adults (Maximum of 8).

**Prepare a new community garden** with families of El Rio Villas Community, 62 Shams Way, Winters; 10am-12:30pm. Families with children older than 10, young adults, adults.

#### **Bending the Arc: Afternoon Projects**

**Valentines** for immigrant detainees at Rio Cosumnes Detention Center. 1-3pm, UUCD library. Families with children of any age, young adults and adults.

**Davis Community Meals** Upgrade the pantry. 1:30-3:30pm, St. Martins Church, 640 Hawthorn Ln, Davis. Families with children 12 and older, young adults, adults (maximum of 7).

**Quilt** with UUCD Quilting Bee. 2-5pm, 1102 Kent Avenue, Davis. Young adults & adults.

**Yolo Food Bank** Sew bags. 3-5pm, 1102 Kent Avenue, Davis. Age 6 and up.

#### **Celebrating our faith/YOU ARE UUCD, Evening**

**All Church Dinner for All Ages!** 5:30-7:30pm, UUCD social hall.

Meatless entrée provided; bring beverage(s). If your last name begins with A-M bring salad for 6; if it begins with N-Z bring dessert for 6. Singing and a short program follow dinner. Activities & supervised play for children in the Senghas Room, just off the Social Hall. You are welcome at the dinner even if you don’t participate in a project.



**Sign up for a project and/or RSVP to dinner:** social justice table after worship or:

**<http://tinyurl.com/UUCD-Arc>**

**Details: Robin Datel, Stefan Harvey or [office@uudavis.org](mailto:office@uudavis.org)**