

Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis (UUCD) Theme Journal – December – Presence



What does it mean to be a presence for others?

In mid-November Elizabeth Assenza and I were invited to a UC Davis Docu-Ally seminar for university staff and educators. The room was filled to capacity with professors, instructors, administrators and health care workers, all wanting to learn how to be more effective in supporting undocumented students.

After hearing from the staff who lead the seminar, a panel of four undocumented students explained how their perspective has changed since the national election. One student has lived in the United States since he was an infant. The United States is his country, and he has known no other home. As he walked home from campus on November 8, he found himself watching the shadows of the buildings for possible danger. “Build the Wall” had been written in chalk on the wall across from the Student Community Center, and he wondered if those who wrote it would suddenly feel more empowered to use physical violence to express their views. His fears were echoed by the other students.

Panelists told of their fear that they, or family members will be deported. They spoke about their responsibility to care for parents and siblings. They often referred to the daily fear for their physical safety. They wept and comforted each other.

This room full of educators made themselves truly present. When the students made specific requests for help, the seminar attendees listened and made commitments that will truly help the students.

However, one of the best results of the seminar was when the students looked around the room at the end of our time together. They said, “There are so many of you here. We wondered if people care. Thank you for really seeing us.” And they teared-up again.

There was bitter-sweet hope in that room, and it came from the results of living with presence. This is a month to practice being present for others, and ask them to do the same for you. – Rev. Beth Banks, Senior Minister

❖ www.uudavis.org → Events/Publications → 2016-17, December – Presence ❖

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We are entering a magical time of year, a time many of us need right now for renewal and hope, when thinking about others, even strangers, is expected. We are asked to be more present to the needs—and ultimately to the joys—of those around us.

Inspirational author, Mastin Kipp asks "At the end of the day: do others feel loved in your presence? This is the spiritual bottom line." How can we bring more love to this season? How might you open yourself to opportunities for being more present? Perhaps you reach out to an old friend with whom you shared a special holiday years ago. Perhaps you seek to be more present to decorating the house or setting the table—you are, after all, creating a sacred space for togetherness and celebration. Perhaps you stop for an extra moment to remember the anticipation of sitting on Santa's lap. Be present with this community as we Deck the Halls on Sunday, Dec. 4, during the 11:15 service, and then join caroling groups out into the community.

Also remember that the holidays can be tender times for us. Often, we feel the absence of someone who is not with us this year. Often, we feel disconnected from families or friends. Often, our expectations are higher than our experiences and we are left disappointed. As those tender feelings arise in you, I hope you will remember the love and care of this community. You may find comfort at our Longest Night service on Saturday, Dec. 17, at 7pm.

As we enter this special time of year, I thank you for offering your presence here.

Blessings, Rev. Morgan McLean, Assistant Minister for Congregational Life



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Read

Parenting with Presence: Practices for Raising Conscious, Confident, Caring Kids by Susan Stiffelman.

"Shows parents how they can transform parenting into a spiritual practice," Eckhart Tolle. Learn how a child's crying or challenging behavior can lead to more conscious, spiritually tuned-in, effective, even enjoyable parenting.

<https://susanstiffelman.com/books/>

Present Moment Wonderful Moment by Thich Nhat Hanh.. "Reciting these poetic, yet practical verses can help us to slow down and enjoy each moment of our lives." For all ages. <http://www.parallax.org/product/present-moment-wonderful-moment-mindfulness-verses-for-daily-living/>

Sermon: *Presents and Presence*, "The nicest gifts people have given me have been enabling, confirming gifts, bestowing understanding and self-esteem, help in time of trouble, and delight for ordinary days. What struck me most was the connection between the gift and the giver of the gift and the sense of appreciation for that person in their lives at that time."

<http://uuwestport.org/sermons/rev-frank-hall-minister-emeritus/frank-hall/presents-and-presence-december-21-2008>



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Worship

Hymn of the Month, “Peace, Peace, Peace” by Rick & Sylvia Powell

December 4, 9:30 & 11:15am, Holy, Holy, Holy, Rev. Morgan McLean, with Rev. Beth Banks, Elizabeth Assenza, Bob Hathaway. How does one identify the presence of something holy? For some a burning bush appears, for others it's in a smile, others struggle to find it. This service invites you to consider such a presence, and how we might find it every day.

★ **Spirited Collection: World Wildlife Fund.** *Make checks out to UUCD, memo: WWF.*

★ **UU Service Committee Guest at Your Table:** *Dec 4, bring a check for the total collected in your box to support UUSC's human rights work. Make checks out to UUCD, memo “UUSC.” Or, write “UUSC Membership” in the memo of your check to join UUSC's mailing list. <http://www.uusc.org/welcome-to-guest-at-your-table>*

11:15am, Deck the Hall: This service will move from the sanctuary into the social hall for our annual holiday decoration of our space. All ages are invited to decorate the tree, make crafts, and join us for a soup lunch. Members of the Sparks Choir sing as we share this time together. Volunteer to join our Soup Team: re@uudavis.org

12:15pm, Caroling: Move from the Deck the Hall celebration to the homes of some of our senior members and those who could use some cheer. The more carolers we have, the more seasonal cheer we can give. We'll leave the church festivities and take our songs on the road for another hour and a half. Join our carolers: care@uudavis.org

December 11, 9:30 & 11:15am, Prophet Mohammed's Birthday, Rev. Beth Banks, Ben Bazor, Worship Associate. The Muslim tradition is to honor Mohammed's birthday by telling stories of his life. He was a humble man, filled with fear, awe and doubt because of a presence that came to him. This is the second year that we have offered this service to better understand the faith of Islam. Sufi musician, Lua Hightower, is our guest musician for both services.

Diving Deep: Dinner and Learning at SALAM Center, Sacramento. See page 4 for details.

December 17, 7pm, The Longest Night, Revs. Beth Banks & Morgan McLean; Stacie Frerichs, Worship Associate. We take one night to welcome the darkness and enter an hour of reflection. We acknowledge the strife in the world, the division in our country, global warming, deaths of loved ones, and the disappointments in our own lives. There will be readings, music, and singing, ending with a large expanse of candlelight across the front of the church: a visible testimony of our community of hope. Leave the sanctuary with a symbol of the sun and the sweetness in life. Music by [Juliebells](#).

December 18, ONE service at 11:15am, *The Wholly Family*, Elizabeth Assenza; Elli Norris, Worship Associate. We celebrate the many forms of family, including singles who find family with chosen friends, families of same-sex couples as well as husband and wife. We recognize families without children, with birth children, adopted children, and foster children. Question: "Is there a person in your family who inspired you? Tell us about their presence in your life."

★ Special Collection – Davis Media Access: *Non-commercial community media fills a critical need, teaching both digital literacy and media production, and helping to highlight the voices of non-profits, community activists, marginalized voices, and perspectives outside the mainstream. Davis Media Access (DMA) fills this need in Yolo County, partnering with schools, local governments, community groups and people like you! To learn more about how to listen, watch and support, please visit <http://davismedia.org>.*
Autumn Labbé-Renault, Executive Director & UU Member Make checks out to UUCD, memo DMA.

DECEMBER 24, CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES

5pm, All Ages Christmas Eve Service: features a no rehearsal Christmas pageant. All are welcome to participate! Family Chime Choir performs.

6pm Cookie Reception: You're invited to bring cookies/finger foods to share (*please, nothing needing dishes or utensils*).

8pm, For Such a Night as This: Come for a traditional night of carols, readings, homilies, and a choir singing to bring us peace and goodwill. We end with candlelight, reminding us that our individual flames can illuminate the world.

★ Christmas Eve Special Collection: IRWS, *UUCD Hosts the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter, Jan29-Feb 3*. We provide a safe sleeping spot and food for 40 homeless guests. Our congregation comes together in service: learning about each other and our guests, and learning that we can count on each other. We become a part of something bigger than ourselves, connected to our Davis faith community. <http://www.interfaith-shelter.org/> Checks made out to UUCD; memo, IRWS.

December 25, ONE service at 11:15am, *Moravian Love Feast: A Taste of Heaven*, Rev. Beth Banks & Elizabeth Assenza; Barbara Meixner, Pianist. This is a very tasty Christmas Day service, of chocolate and honey bread. It's an hour of carols, readings, and then a communion of chocolate with honey bread, both considered food from Heaven. Come in your relaxed Christmas Day clothes for a sweet, uplifting morning.

January 1, ONE service at 11:15am. ☞ **January 8, 9:30 & 11:15am**, We return to our regular worship schedule.

Listen Download or stream edited Sunday services at www.uudavispodcast.org

"On Being" Podcast: The Last Quiet Places: Silence and the Presence of Everything. "Silence is an endangered species," says Gordon Hempton, who defines real quiet as presence: not an absence of sound, but of noise. The Earth, as he knows it, is a "solar-powered jukebox." Quiet is a "think tank of the soul." <http://www.onbeing.org/program/last-quiet-places/4557>

"On Being" Podcast: In the Presence of Elephants and Whales. "We were made and set here to give voice to our astonishments," Annie Dillard. Katy Payne, acoustic biologist, found her astonishment listening to elephants and whales (composers of songs). <http://www.onbeing.org/program/katy-payne-in-the-presence-of-elephants-and-whales/241>

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

"Allow your life to be a work in progress. Do not hurry to mold the masterpiece; Always there is more to be done. Life is always unfinished business." —Richard S. Gilbert

Would you be more present to your life if you weren't trying to perfect it or win at it?

Attend **Diving Deep, Presence**: Lectures at The SALAM Islamic Center in Sacramento, Dec 16, Dinner at 5:30pm; Program at 6:30pm: Three speakers talk about Muhammad as a family man, a mentor, and a presence for youth. Join Rev. Beth Banks by carpool from Davis, or meet us there. Either way, RSVP to re@uudavis.org before Friday, Dec. 9, so our hosts know how many to expect for dinner. Event flier: <http://tinyurl.com/SALAMdec16>
