

Unitarian Universalist
Church of Davis
(UUCD)
Theme Journal

March:
**What Does It Mean
to be a
Community of Risk?**



Are you a person who likes to take risks? If so, what kind of risk are you willing to take and why? In preparation for this month, when we explore the danger or value of risk, I thought about my relationship with it. I'm not drawn to experiences that we'd associate with adrenaline rushes, so you're not likely to find me driving fast cars or using the high diving board at the pool. I've come to the conclusion that I'm a somewhat calculated risk-taker. That doesn't mean that I don't engage in risky behavior. In almost every case, my risks pay off in unexpected ways.

In the summer of 1985, I hefted a backpack on my shoulders and traveled through mainland China. I had just completed several years living in South Korea, and would be starting seminary soon. Traveling alone with no ability to speak or understand Chinese felt adventuresome.

My first day in China, the adventure started to feel risky. I totally misunderstood the distance of my first train ride. By the time the train pulled into the station, it was raining and dark. However, I'd been in conversation with an American businessman and the company's translator. We all disembarked at the same stop and, when they realized I would be staying in a hostel, they cheerfully drove me from one full hostel to another. That's when I discovered my travel guide, sent by friends in United States, was close to worthless. Without pausing for a moment, my acquaintances included me in their hotel reservation. Their generosity set the tone for the remainder of my travels.

I was inspired. I decided that every day I would say "Yes" to something unexpected. The only limitation I set was never to risk my physical safety. I said "Yes" to the Chinese graduate student; we (and many others) hiked the pathway to a mountaintop restaurant: famous for their steaming dumpling stew. Without my commitment to the risk of "Yes," I would have missed the unique tastes and sights; I would have missed receiving the student's abundant goodwill. I said "Yes" to the ferry trip down the Yangtze River before the dam was built. It took weeks to recover from the flu I caught on that trip, but even this led me to another risk that paid off: Chinese medicine. Now I slip into San Francisco's Chinese medicine "drugstores" for the pungent and heavy smells of roots and herbs.

The results of risk-taking weren't always welcome in the immediate moment, but my curiosity and sense of connection had never been more alive. Each time I took a risk, for the sake of connecting with a web of existence larger than myself, something amazing happened. I was alone, but never lonely.

This month our congregation will offer each other many opportunities to risk, connect, and feel engaged with something larger than ourselves. Will you find a risk that takes you beyond what and who you know now?

– Rev. Beth Banks, Senior Minister

Being part of a community is risky. As you deepen your involvement in this church, you will stretch your comfort zone. Greater understanding of both ourselves and others requires humility, vulnerability, and responsibility.

The risk of not-knowing is big. Often we get stuck in concerns like "what if I don't know what to say" or "what if I do the wrong thing?" Well, what if? What if we brought our humility to more interactions and felt more comfortable saying "I'm not familiar with that" or "please tell me your experience." And, when we accidentally offend, what if we were ready to apologize? I believe that, because this church community is built on trust and respect, we can all be ready to risk mistakes—and forgiveness.

We can also risk sharing more of ourselves and our vulnerabilities. There are many places in our lives where we "put on a good face," and church doesn't need to be one. We come together with the awareness that we all have unique stories that make us who we are. Our most tender places often show the most of who we are. We risk being hurt when we share those tender places, but we also risk being healed and loved.

Responsibility is another risk of community. It's easy to say "that's not my problem," yet in community we share the decisions and the outcomes. To risk taking responsibility means deeper engagement. It means considering many view points and disagreement to lead to a clearer vision. It also means that whether the outcome is successful, unsure, or a failure, we know the intentions were good and we can more easily realign for the next time.

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

Sunday Worship

March 5, 9:30 & 11:15am

FIRST SUNDAY (11:15am, children and youth participate first 20 min., Teacher Recognition).

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



The Risk of Loving; Rev. Beth Banks; Herb Garman, Guest Worship Associate. Risk is personal. To love is to risk having your heart broken. Daring to speak with authority is to risk appearing a fool. Taking the lead creates the risk that you will let others down (and worse, yourself). However, never risking could mean that we come to the end of our life and wonder if we lived fully. What risks are worth taking?

Before Sunday, consider: When have you taken a risk? What risk is worth the possibility of loss or failure?

March 12, 9:30 & 11:15am, A Lenten Practice of Risk, Elizabeth Assenza; Tamara Range, Worship Associate.

March 19, 9:30 & 11:15am, What If We Broke In Style through Ritual?; Rev. Tet Gallardo, Balázs Scholar at Starr King School for the Ministry. Conversations are the best forums to wage conflict. What if they weren't supposed to resolve conflicts? What if we are meant to learn to live with contradictions? What if we are supposed to live with our enemies? What if ritual was meant for such times?

Rev. Tet Gallardo, Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines, Manila, Bicutan Congregation. For 20+ years, she's worked organizing women, youth, farmers, and labor interests for better legislation. She has served 30+ NGOs and as consultant for many government leaders and political campaign managers. She founded a company that helps Philippine startups establish business and develop the value chain – Amansinaya.com

[Special Collection – International UUism](#) (Dove & Serpent), We covenant with The Daroc Church in Transylvania via The Partner Church Council. Checks to UUCD, memo Dove. Donate anytime: <http://tinyurl.com/DonateUUCD>

March 26, 9:30 & 11:15am, Risk Together, Rev. Beth Banks; Stacie Frerichs, Worship Associate. Risk is what we can do together. What risks have UUs have taken historically? What risks might we be ready to take now?

[Activity 12:30pm: Documentary: Sharp's War](#), produced by PBS, Senghas Room. Bring your lunch. We'll end with a focus question from the UUA curriculum. Film is about the origin of the UU Service Committee, our resource for work with refugees, the Sanctuary movement, and the Declaration of Conscience: <http://tinyurl.com/UUSC-DoC>

Public domain image: <https://pixabay.com/en/shoes-guy-stairs-walk-1690644/>

Listen **Risk Sitting Down** “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” - Winston Churchill. Sometimes speaking up is a way to avoid courageously listening to the other side. Putting yourself on the line to “change them” can be a way to avoid them changing us, or a missed opportunity to grow. We should urge each other to “keep going” and “take control.” Other times, we must risk letting go of control and just sit with unknowing. Make room for a “spiritual time out” and risk “letting a little more in” before you “let them have it.”
Activity: Use this reflection to begin a meeting, a dinner, to open an interesting conversation with friends or family.

1. Find three opportunities to “sit down and listen” when your first instinct is to “stand up and speak.” Though not easy, it will be worth the risk.
2. Come to your group ready to share what it was like to try to listen better and (maybe more importantly) what it was like to better monitor (and understand) your instinct to stand up and speak.

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

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:

"It's too bad that one has to conceive of sports as being the only arena where risks are, for all of life is risk exercise. That's the only way to live more freely, and more interestingly." – Rev. William Sloane Coffin

What does Rev. Coffin mean by “all of life is a risk exercise?” Can you identify a risk you took that enriched your life?

Share **Risk Stepping into our Kitchen:** Make community happen over coffee or lunch; set the stage for new friendships through hospitality. • We need three people to make coffee between services. • Gather a group of friends, Small Group Ministry, social or spiritual group, team or committee to prepare lunch for after the 11:15am service. • Sign-up for either/both at the Get Involved Tables in the Social Hall. Be inspired: <http://tinyurl.com/Risk-Kitchen>

Sing **Hymn Sing-Along**, Sparks Choir invites you to risk raising your voice in song with others. Come for an hour of singing on March 19, after the second service. You might object, “I don’t have a great voice” or “I have a hard time holding onto my part”. We say, “Come!” If you love to sing, be a part of something bigger than your voice! Embrace the joy of singing! We’ll teach parts, sing and sing some more! We’ll have time at the end for a few requests.

Move **Contra Dance for a Cause**, March 4, 7-10pm, Davis Community Church, 412 C St. Benefit for OpeningDoorsInc.org helping resettle refugees in Sacramento. Risk stepping slightly beyond your comfort level. Live music, with an experienced caller who will guide everyone through the dance moves! Make some new friends who want to support this cause. Pre-purchase your ticket: \$15, dccpres.org or Avid Reader Active.



Public Domain Image: <https://pixabay.com/en/feet-boots-walking-foot-bridge-1245957/>



Bending the Arc: Social Justice Opportunities/Update

Risk, the March theme, is relevant as we consider how to deal with challenges of these turbulent times and as we examine where to attempt to affect (and/or resist) change. How much risk are we willing to take as individuals and as a congregation? Risk provides opportunities for growth individually and collectively as a faith community.

The Social Justice Coordinating Committee, chaired by Robin Dattel and Stefan Harvey, offers the following opportunities for risk taking. Some activities are low risk, some medium risk, and some even high risk. We welcome your participation wherever you are comfortable.

Here are opportunities in the coming weeks.

- Create a Greener Vision. Feel passionate about an environmental issue; eager to be involved in environmental work as the new Administration and Congress threaten advances? If so, come identify next steps for UUCD, examine the risks, and state your commitment. Sunday, Feb. 26, 12:45-2:15pm, Sanctuary; or Wednesday, March 1, 7-9pm, Cottage. Questions: Lorraine Visher, lvisher@gmail.com or Robin Dattel, rddd@dcn.org
- Advocacy Session. Sunday, March 12, 12:45-2pm, Sanctuary. Hear from elected officials and other decision-makers about what's effective advocacy; learn about advocacy resources; share your experiences thus far in the first 100 days of the Trump Administration; think about what risks you want to take; contribute to UUCD's plan of action and chart an individual plan.
- Interfaith Convening About Sanctuary. Wednesday, March 15, 7-9:30pm, Join Rev. Beth Banks & Social Justice co-chairs, Robin Dattel and Stefan Harvey, at Congregation Bet Haverim, 1757 Anderson Road.

The Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s offered safe haven for Central Americans fleeing violence, seeking refugee status, and at risk of deportation from the United States. In 2017, congregations of many faith traditions have started offering sanctuary to undocumented people in imminent danger of being deported.

Members and friends of the UU Church of Davis are invited to be a part of an interfaith community to develop a Sanctuary coalition on March 15 at Bet Haverim. This meeting will allow faith communities already working on sanctuary to share where they are in the process, and those who are interested in supporting the movement to receive information and learn how they can contribute.

Learn more about UU Sanctuary from the UU College of Social Justice, go to: <https://youtu.be/vgsYufAfqk8>

- Declaration of Conscience. <http://www.uua.org/action/show-love/declaration-conscience>
Throughout February and March, join others at UUCD, our Board of Directors, Uniting for Racial Justice, and the Social Justice Coordinating Committee (SJCC) and thousands of other UUs across the US by signing this statement of UU values and the importance of action drafted by UUA and UUSC.
- Love Your Neighbor Lawn Signs. To date, some 200 Love signs have been placed in yards, and multiple signs can be found on C and Corona Streets in Davis and on Northampton Drive in Carmichael. We've heard the signs have prompted interesting conversations with neighbors. Take this medium risk and join in this action of love and solidarity. Get your *Love Your Neighbor* sign for your yard, window, and/or your next rally. 250 more signs have been ordered and are expected within days.

Finally, we remind you of the on-going UUCD justice ministries (Faithful Friends-Amigos Fieles, Davis Community Meals, Dove and Serpent, Quilting Bee, and Uniting for Racial Justice); they provide low, medium and high risk opportunities to get involved. Information about these ministries and who to contact is included in the SJCC brochure available in the social hall.

Public Domain Image: <https://pixabay.com/en/pedestrians-people-busy-movement-400811/>

Take a Risk for Justice: **Possible Follow-up Actions** to Uniting for Racial Justice's Discussion of *Just Mercy*

On January 22, 2017 Uniting for Racial Justice (URJ) sponsored a discussion of *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, facilitated by Marty West. The book elicited strong emotions and highlighted the urgency and necessity for reform. URJ and the Social Justice Coordinating Committee identified the following actions individuals can take. Note in #8: establish a new justice leadership team.

- 1. Read and study further.** Bryan Stevenson's *Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)* website, <http://eji.org/> has a lot of information and news stories on the topics discussed in *Just Mercy*, including racial justice, children in prison, mass incarceration, and the death penalty. Additional resources include reports, videos, and links. Some of this material could be the basis for further study and discussion. The website provides ways to donate and to "sign up." Contact the Adult Religious Exploration Committee if you find a book, movie or other resource ideal for discussion. Rev. Morgan McLean (RevMcLean@uudavis.org) works with that committee.
- 2. Support local legal clinics.** Marty West, the discussion leader, suggested supporting the UC Davis Law School clinics that do work related to the themes explored by *Just Mercy*. These include the Civil Rights Clinic, the *Prison Law Clinic*, and the *Aoki Social Justice Clinic*. The first of these addresses "the civil rights of prisoners and other indigents." The second involves "persons with problems related to incarceration in state prisons." In the third, "students litigate cases in the areas of criminal defense, workers' rights, environmental justice, and other areas related to critical race theory." Information about the clinics and donations to them: <https://law.ucdavis.edu/clinics/>
- 3. Learn about local programs and volunteer.** Criminal justice at the local level is largely a county function. The Yolo County Sheriff's Office webpage includes a list of programs that serve inmates in the county detention centers. <http://www.yolocountysheriff.com/services/jail/programs/> Some services are provided by third parties, including organizations that provide volunteer opportunities. Activities at the juvenile facility: <http://www.yolocounty.org/law-justice/probation/institutional-services/juvenile-detention-facility>.
- 4. Educate yourself about local budgets and criminal justice issues and advocate for additional funding and programs.** Follow what is happening regarding criminal justice issues and budgets in the county. Stay informed about any such issues coming up for a vote of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. Many materials relating to their meetings are online: <http://www.yolocounty.org/general-government/board-of-supervisors>. Supervisors Oscar Villegas and Don Saylor have newsletters. Don Saylor is a member of our congregation.
- 5. Get involved with organizations which address criminal justice issues.** Many advocacy organizations exist to deal with criminal justice issues. Locally, the *Davis Phoenix Coalition* (this month's recipient of UUCD's special collection) includes several members of our congregation: <http://www.davisphoenixco.org/>. *Black Lives Matter* groups are other examples. At the state level, *Californians for Safety and Justice*. <http://www.safeandjust.org/>, includes the *Criminal Justice Legislative Action Network*, "your one-stop web portal for all things related to criminal justice policy in California." *The Friends Committee on Legislation of California* often works on behalf of bills reforming our criminal justice system: <http://www.fclca.org/>. Criminal justice reform is not currently a priority of the *UU Justice Ministry of California (UUJMCA)*, <http://uujmca.org/>, but its priorities are determined by those who are active in the organization and therefore change. *Death Penalty Focus*, <http://deathpenalty.org/> is one group working to eliminate the death penalty worldwide and in California. *Legal Services for Prisoners with Children* runs a number of criminal justice reform campaigns, including "Ban the Box," (question and check box, "Have you been convicted by a court?" that appears on applications for employment, housing, public benefits, insurance, loans, etc.). <http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/>
- 6. Get involved in electoral politics.** You can work for candidates for office at all levels who are knowledgeable about abuses and inadequacies in our criminal justice system and who have worked and/or will work to make things better. Our church cannot endorse candidates or ballot measures, but it can educate people about them. You as an individual can endorse, work for, and financially support candidates and ballot measures. You can table in support of a cause (*not endorse a candidate or ballot measure*) in the Social Hall with the backing of an existing church leadership group.
- 7. Visit immigrants detained far from family.** Participate in *Amigos Fieles/Faithful Friends* and visit detained immigrants at the Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center, Elk Grove. Training provided; carpooling from UUCD may be possible. Contact Susan Lange, the Sacramento coordinator of *Amigos Fieles/Faithful Friends*, susanlange.UU@gmail.com. Contact Ramon Urbano about visiting juvenile detained immigrants at the Woodland facility, rurbano@earthlink.net.
- 8. Organize a new justice leadership team about criminal justice.** If you and four other people are ready to work on criminal justice issues and wish to provide leadership on the topic, create a new leadership group. You can propose this very thing to the Social Justice Coordinating Committee (SJCC). Contact Robin Datel, rddd@dcn.davis.ca.us, or Stefan Harvey, stefh2002@yahoo.com, co-chairs of SJCC who will explain the process for establishing new leadership teams and will support you.