

News from Live Oak – March, 2013

Seder Ritual and Potluck Meal – Tuesday, March 26th

Tuesday, March 26th, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Seder Ritual and Potluck Meal @ Berkeley Fellowship of UUs (1924 Cedar St. at Bonita)

The Berkeley Fellowship of UUs has invited everyone from Live Oak UU to join them for an intergenerational Passover Seder and potluck meal. This oldest of Hebrew rituals, the Seder commemorates the liberation of the Hebrew people from Egyptian bondage and is celebrated at the springtime renewal of the Earth.



There are two parts to the Seder. The first is the ritual retelling of the ancient story of liberation and its meaning for us today. The second is the dinner itself, which is an organized potluck. For the Passover potluck, please do not bring anything leavened or anything containing wheat, spelt, oats, rye or barley. (In other words, no pasta or bread. Rice, potatoes, quinoa are fine. And, of course, any fruit or vegetable is fine.) BFUU will provide roasted chicken.

A UU Seder is a lovely tradition and we are very fortunate to be able to celebrate this with the Berkeley Fellowship and Rev. Ben who has been so supportive of our congregation. We strongly encourage you to participate in this event. It will be lovely!

Please make your reservation with Richard Stomer at rsstromer@gmail.com or call him at 510-682-6302. He'll need to know how many are coming and, hopefully, what you will contribute to the potluck. Thanks, all!

Congregational Meeting: This Sunday!

Join us this Sunday, March 24 (2:00-4:00 p.m.) in the Parish Hall at Christ Episcopal Church. Main topic: Every Sunday programming. Richard Stomer is lining up a regular guest minister for us, someone who will preach once a month. Ty Meier will speak about an idea he has for discussion groups on the 2nd Sunday of each month. Renee Harper will be there as the overall coordinator for our alternate Sundays. And we hope you will be there to help us know what *you* are looking for – and in what ways you will be able to help us move forward. In addition to organizing the actual programming for the additional Sundays, we need a few more volunteers for such tasks as opening/closing the church; setting up sanctuary or parish hall; running the audio; greeting people; arranging for music (guest musicians, small segments of our choir, instrumentalists, e.g.); and more.

Want to Help Create Worship?

We're seeking an additional Worship Leader and one more Worship Associate to help create and present worship services at Live Oak.

The position of Worship Leader is very important to the life of our community. Worship Leaders have primary responsibility for the overall focus, content, and consistency of Live Oak worship services. Previous experience in leading worship would be very helpful, though not essential. Worship Chairperson Richard Stromer would be happy to provide any training or coaching required.

Worship Associates assist Worship Leaders in the creation and presentation of our services. Their duties might include preparing a 3-5 minute "personal reflection" related to the theme of a particular worship service, finding and reciting a poem or other reading, presenting the "Embracing Meditation," and introducing the donation collection for a worship service. As our Worship Leaders can tell you, these activities not only offer a valuable opportunity to reflect on what matters to you, but also a chance to add your unique voice to the worship life of our community.

If you're interested in becoming either a Worship Leader or Worship Associate – or if you have any questions about our worship program – please contact Richard Stromer at rsstromer@gmail.com or call him at 510-682-6302.

Only Three More Sessions: The Wisdom of Faith

There's still time to join us to watch and discuss this DVD series! Bestselling author and professor Huston Smith offers a fascinating tour of the world's major religions -- Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam -- in conversations with journalist Bill Moyers.



Join us at the home of David and Lisa Fry. We meet on the third Friday of the month (April, May, and June). Drop in for one session -- or come for them all. We will gather at 7:30 p.m. Each DVD runs 55 minutes. Then we'll spend time sharing and discussing what we've heard. And Richard Stromer has offered to guide us during the discussion time.

The next session will be Friday, April 19th. Topics: Christianity & Judaism, but we're learning that Huston, whose interest is comparative religions, is likely to tie other faiths in. Please join us for these highly reviewed, fascinating conversations. RSVP: lisafry@gmail.com.

Live Oak Welcomes New Music Director

A hearty welcome to Mark Daniel, who has been selected as our new Music Director. He will officially start with Live Oak on April 1.

Mark has a long history as a church musician, going all the way back to his childhood. As the minister's son, he played piano and guitar and sang in church regularly. He has since served as Music Director in congregations of various denominations and says, "presenting good music in a spiritually intended setting is something which fulfills me as a musician."

Mark has a Masters of Music Degree in Vocal Performance from Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont and for more than 30 years has been a professional singer in the Bay Area. He

is currently the Music Director at St. Cuthbert's Episcopal Church in Oakland. Mark is an original member of Chanticleer, founded in 1978, where he enjoyed a 10-year career performing and recording with the San Francisco-based 12 voice men's vocal ensemble.

Many thanks to Kathryn Duke, Kate Hand, and Jay Roller who served as the search committee – and to our choir for auditioning several candidates. We look forward to hearing the music they create, led by Mark.



Funding the Congregation of Our Dreams

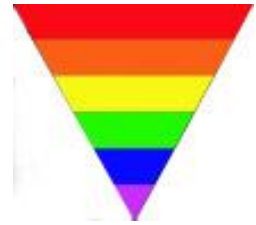
Each year in the Spring, members and friends make a pledge to donate -- as generously as they are able -- to this fellowship. Our pledges support the growth, vision, maintenance, and day-to-day operations of the fellowship. This year we plan to expand to Every-Sunday Programming, a change that will deepen our faith and help us grow. But it also means those of us who can, need to stretch a bit more to finance this dream. So far, half the pledges that have come in have increased, many of them by 20% or more. We are so grateful.

The Stewardship team – and our board -- is asking everyone who is able to make a generous Stewardship pledge in support of our vision. Your pledge will be for July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014.

The team sent pledge cards out recently. If you have not completed yours yet, please do so as quickly as you can and return it to David Fry. If you did not receive a card – or if you have any questions, please email David (davidfry@gmail.com) or call him at 510-504-6014.

Progress: Our Welcoming Congregation Process

Seven members of Live Oak participated in “Practicing Radical Hospitality,” the joint Live Oak-Berkeley Fellowship 6-week class on becoming more welcoming. Those who attended some or all of the sessions include: Bernadette Alexander, David Fry, Lisa Fry, Ginny Irving, Mindy Mull, Darlene Pagano, and Richard Stromer. The classes were led by a team which included Rev. Ben Meyers, Caitlin Cotter (BFUU’s Director of Religious Education and a ministry student), Cecilia Owen (Live Oak’s Religious Exploration Teacher and Ministerial Intern for BFUU), and Richard Stromer who served on the Steering Committee of the Welcoming Congregation at another congregation.



During the last session of the program, we determined some follow-up steps to be taken – by individuals and by our congregation as a whole. Our Welcoming Congregation (WC) team will be looking at:

- One addition to our bylaws
- Adding a phrase of welcome to our Sunday Orders of Service
- Assuring our vocabulary (in worship, meetings, and written materials) reflects our commitment to welcoming
- Engaging in outreach to LGBTIQ communities
- Celebrating National Coming Out Day, participating in Gay Pride events
- Continuing our involvement in Alameda’s interfaith Harvey Milk Day celebrations
- Offer special programs (films, TED talks, and more) to keep us all aware and involved
- Offer Our Whole Lives sexuality program at all levels as we grow

Watch for more information about the Welcoming Congregation process, which is being led by Bernadette Alexander, Lisa Fry, and Richard Stromer. Suggestions? Let us know!

Garage Sale: Thank You, All



With Roger Hallsten’s leadership, many from Live Oak contributed items for our second “Garage Sale,” held at Roger’s home in Berkeley. The sale, which provided motivation for folks to get rid of things they no longer used, also raised \$317.00 for Live Oak. Many thanks to Roger, his assistant Jay Roller, and to all who contributed items for sale and all who purchased things.

We create loving community through worship and service to others.

- Live Oak UU’s Mission Statement

Celebration of the Life of Debi Fidler

The celebration of the life of Debi Fidler, who had been attending Live Oak UU regularly, was celebrated on Saturday, March 9. The Revs. Wendy Bartel and Lynn Gardner, both friends of Debi's, put together a lovely service, slide show, and memorabilia display. Several Live Oak members helped with the reception and attended the service. Many thanks to Nancy Balassi for her help in coordinating Live Oak's participation and to Richard Stromer, Bill Hieb, Darlene Pagano, and Kathryn Duke, who not only provided some of the food for the reception, but helped with set-up and clean-up. Live Oak, with a donation from a member, was able to provide a generous selection of Indian food, a favorite of Debi's, for the reception.



Also, thanks to Darlene who shared thoughtful and heartfelt remarks about Debi's time in our fellowship during the service.

The printed program included acknowledgements of people who helped in various ways after Debi's death, including Richard Stromer and Kathryn Duke for their assistance with cleaning out Debi's apartment. It also recognized "folks from the Live Oak UU congregation for Indian food in honor of Debi's love for baingan bharta."

Darlene selected one item for Live Oak from the display of memorabilia offered to those at the celebration. Soon you will see Debi's "prayer" flags with words such as *Love, Diversity, Respect* displayed in the sanctuary at our services. Debi is – and will be – missed, but remembered.

Theater Outing: Rent -- Saturday, March 23, 8:00 p.m.

How many minutes does it take to measure a life? In this 1996 groundbreaking retelling of *La Bohème*, playwrights and rock musicians in New York found inspiration in the tragedy and beauty all around them. Their journey of love and loss is the theme of this musical, one of only five to win both the Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize.



Kathryn Duke has organized a number of Live Oak'ers to attend this performance of the musical at the Altarena Playhouse in Alameda. Some of us will gather at their home for dinner before the play. Interested? See if there are still tickets available: <https://www.audience1st.com/altarena/store/>. If so, order yours and contact Kathryn (kathryn.saenz.duke@gmail.com). We'd love to have you join us.

A bonus: Susan Sonnemaker is one of the Musical Directors for this production.

Caring Committee Expands Services and Members

Live Oak's Caring Committee is pleased to announce Nancy Balassi is the newest member of the group. Along with Sally Kennedy and Jay Roller, she will help coordinate activities and resources to assist our members and friends during times of ill health or special difficulty or need.

The Caring Committee can arrange some meals to be delivered or visits to people in the hospital or a ride to a doctor's appointment.



Through the work of our Board and the Caring Committee and the generosity of Rev. Ben Meyers, we now can also offer pastoral counseling to Live Oak UU members and pledging friends. Pastoral counseling (talking with a minister) is available for spiritual need or difficulties beyond the scope of our Caring Committee. It includes assessment and recommendations, generally taking place over one or two sessions of 30 to 60 minutes. Counseling with Rev. Ben may be accessed through the Caring Committee or by contacting a member of the Board of Trustees.

If you have a request – or if you know of someone in our congregation who needs a hand -- please contact Sally (deskennedy@att.net), Jay (JayBRoller2002@yahoo.com) or 510-295-7832, or Nancy (nbalassi@aol.com).

Small Group Ministry: Opportunities to Gather

Members of Small Group Ministry (SGM) groups get to know one another and deepen their own spirituality by participating together in discussions of topics of universal human significance. The topics are intended to focus the group's attention on the things we have in common just by being human. We have several people hoping to help create a new group, perhaps meeting on Tuesday evenings. And the Wednesday night group has room for another person or two. Email Darlene Pagano (dpagano@igc.org), if you are interested! And let us know which night works best for you. Please reply ASAP. We hope to get a new group started quickly.

Parents & Kids: News

Michelle Richards, author of *Tending the Flame: The Art of Unitarian Universalist Parenting*, has an interesting article on *Questions & Answers* in this month's UU World. It's estimated children will ask more than 400,000 questions by age 5. Since many of their questions are about the meaning of life, the nature of the universe, and why bad things happen, it is parents' challenge to make the intangible tangible. Here's a link to Michelle Richards' recent column:

http://blogs.uuworld.org/parenting/?utm_source=n