

News from Live Oak – July, 2013

Fourth of July: Community Outreach ... And a Lot of Fun!

One of the highlights of the year is Live Oak's participation in Alameda's HUGE July 4th Parade. More than 20,000 people from all over the bay area line the streets to watch.

The SF Chronicle once again [reported the event](#), which they described as being a big melting pot with a small town feel. And they noted the parade included "contingents of Southern Baptists, **Unitarian Universalists**, Sikhs and Buddhists." Woo-hoo!



Pictured above on our float are: Judith Heller, Jackie Roth, Jody Berke (friend of Jackie's), Nanci Armstrong-Temple, Tallulah Armstrong-Temple, Peter Hand, Kathryn Duke, Debra Temple, Jo Green (a Starr King School for the Ministry seminarian and friend of Jay Roller's), Kate Hand, and Mark Daniel (LO's Music Director). (Also there, but not visible in the photo: Annabelle Armstrong-Temple, David Fry, and Jim Freschi.)

This was our most attractive float yet, decorated by Nancy Balassi, David Fry, Jo Green, Kate Hand, and Vicky Jensen. Many others helped create the colorful signs, including two with the names of famous UUs on them. And, of course, our new Live Oak banners (thanks, Ty Meier) were prominent on each side of the float.

And what did the singers sing? This Little Light of Mine, Siyahamba, Yonder Come Day, This Land is Your Land, God Bless America, and others.

Watching and cheering with the crowd gathered at the corner of Grand & Encinal were Nancy Balassi and her nephew Matthew, Lisa Fry, Bill Hieb, Niels Kjellund, Autumn Meier, Ty Meier, Alison Stuart, and Carl Temple.

Many thanks to all who sang on the float and all who came out to cheer! And to:

- Debra Temple for lugging her electronic keyboard for Mark to play.
- Mark Daniel for playing the keyboard for the 3-hour route.
- David Fry for setting up the audio on the float, picking up the truck, and photos.
- Jim Freschi for, once again, driving the 24' truck safely along the 3.2 mile parade route.
- Thanks to Niels Kjellund for the photo (right).
- Vicky Jensen and Jonathan Spencer for hosting a b-b-q and potluck in their yard after the parade – and for allowing the truck to be parked in front of their home for 2 nights.



And many thanks to Kate Hand, the overall chair of this event for the 4th year in a row!

Changing of the Guard

We have been blessed to have Cecilia Owen as our part-time professional teacher for our children this past year. Cecilia, who has also served as the ministerial intern at the Berkeley Fellowship of UUs this year, will be heading to St. Louis to serve a one-year ministerial internship at First Unitarian Church of St. Louis (photo at left).



Please join us on Sunday, August 18th, Cecilia's last day with us, to celebrate her ministry with us and send her off with all our love and best wishes. We will all be holding her in our hearts and hope to see her back in the bay area in the future.

Partnering with APC: School Supplies & Backpacks

There are 1,000 children in Alameda who need our help to start the school year off on the right foot. Alameda Point Collaborative and other community agencies are conducting its second annual *Equipped 4 Success* school supply drive. We helped with this last year (under the leadership of Debra Temple).

Equipped 4 Success is sponsored by the Alameda Education Foundation, Alameda Unified School District, Alameda Point Collaborative, Alameda Boys & Girls Club, Head Start, Girls Inc., and the Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families.

Their goal is to collect supplies and funds to support 1,000 low-income students in Alameda, kindergarten through twelfth grade, with backpacks filled with everything they will need to fully participate in the classroom.



Please bring supplies from the list (below) to our worship services this Sunday (July 21) or August 4.

All items should be new, please!

Backpacks	Glue sticks	spiral bound, perforated)
Pencils, #2	Hand Sanitizer (small bottle)	Pencil Leads
3 hole punch rulers	Highlighter pens	Pencil Sharpener
Agenda/Student Planners	Index cards	Pencils, colored
Binder paper (college ruled)	Kleenex Packet	Pens – blue
Binder paper (wide ruled)	Markers, broad tip	Pens – red
Binders (1" hardcover 3-ring)	Markers, thin tip	Pocket Folders
Crayons (Crayola)	Mechanical Pencils	Post-its
Erasers, pink	Notebooks (college-ruled spiral bound, perforated)	Scissors, adult
Glue – white	Notebooks (wide-ruled)	Scissors, blunt
		Subject dividers

Kathryn Duke is trying to organize a small group of Live Oak'ers to help sort through donations and to fill backpacks. We would do this at APC between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, August 12-16. If you are available during any of these hours – and interested in helping – please let us know the times that work for you on this Doodle:

<http://doodle.com/qfug9kystgnzy6rf>

Report from Congregational Meeting

Two important votes took place at the June 30th meeting. The proposed bylaw change (below) was approved unanimously.

Article III. Membership

SECTION A. MEMBERSHIP

The Fellowship embraces all people, including those of every religious background, any racial and ethnic background, any national origin, any educational level, any income level, any level and type of physical and mental development and ability, any affectional or sexual orientation, **gender identity or expression**, and any age. Any person in sympathy with the purpose and program of this organization may become a member by signing the Membership Book. To remain an active member, a person is expected to participate in the affairs of the organization, and to contribute services and funds as appropriate to the needs and abilities of the organization and of the individual members.

Two changes were made to the proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-2014. We increased the amount of money budgeted for guest ministers and for added money to the Membership/Hospitality line for a paid dishwasher. The budget was then approved unanimously.

We also sang a number of songs. A preliminary list of “regular” hymns was created. The purpose is to help members of the congregation become more familiar and comfortable with some songs that will be used regularly in our services. The list is not finalized, but songs that are currently being considered for our “Top Ten” include:

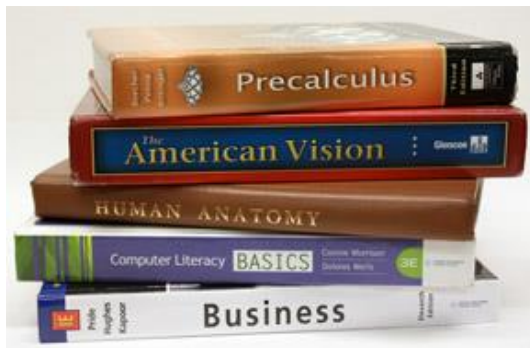
1. #128 For All That Is Our Life
2. #298 Wake, Now, My Senses
3. #299 Make Channels For the Streams of Love
4. #121 We'll Build a Land
5. #21 For the Beauty of the Earth
6. #34 Though I May Speak With Bravest Fire
7. #100 I've Got Peace Like a River
8. #118 This Little Light of Mine
9. #123 Spirit of Life
10. # 131 Love Will Guide Us
11. #163 For the Earth Forever Turning
12. #168 One More Step
13. #205 Amazing Grace
14. #318 We Would Be One
15. #361 Enter, Rejoice, and Come In
16. #348 Guide My Feet
17. #126 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
18. #38 Morning Has Broken
19. #108 My Life Flows On in Endless Song
20. #347 Gather the Spirit



New Social Justice Opportunity: Textbooks for Prisoners

Several months ago, we received a letter from a man named Jacob Reed who is currently incarcerated at Avenal State Prison. Jacob is a UU and a member of the [Church of the Larger Fellowship](#), an on-line spiritual home for UUs and others. He wrote to us – and **all the other** California UU congregations.

Jacob explained that Coastline Community College (CCC) offers a college degree program for inmates. Tuition is paid for, but inmates must purchase their own textbooks. Jacob estimates that only 15% of inmates have the means to afford the textbooks.



He has asked UU churches to create a college textbook fund. Lisa Fry contacted Coastline Community College for more information and then followed up with Rev. Patty Franz who administers the CLF's Ministry to Prisoners program. Through Patty and CCC, we learned of several other congregations interested in pursuing this objective

together: Antelope Valley UU Fellowship (Lancaster), Mt. Diablo UU Church (Walnut Creek), UU Community Church of Santa Monica, and UU Church of Ventura.

We have been coordinating with Bob Nash, the Associate Dean, Distance Learning & Professional Development Coastline Community College. Bob set us up with the college's Foundation. They have opened a separate account (a qualified 501c3 non-profit) to receive funds to be used only for prisoner textbook scholarships. We are now working with the Foundation to create criteria for selecting inmates – across the state, not just at Avenal Prison – who will be eligible for scholarships.

Each church will do its own fundraising. Right now the plan for Live Oak is to donate the monies from our Sunday collection plate periodically to the textbook fund. In addition, members of the group of churches wrote an article for both district newsletters (Pacific Central District and Pacific Southwest District, in the hopes that more churches will join us on this effort.

Jacob, the inmate who has worked hard to get this started, notes "Higher education has been proven to reduce the return rates of prisoners." California currently has a 78% prison return rate. Jacob says, "States which offer higher education programs for prisoners have recidivism rates around 36%."

Questions? Or interested in helping with this project? Please contact Lisa (lisafry@gmail.com).

Divine Questions: From a UU Parenting Blog

The post below is from a blog post by Michelle Richards, author of the book *Tending the Flame: The Art of Unitarian Universalist Parenting*. To read other posts on Michelle's blog: <http://blogs.uuworld.org/parenting/>.

It really doesn't matter if you are a theist, deist, pantheist, agnostic, or atheist—as a parent you will inevitably face a myriad of questions about God. So what do you do when your child professes to have a belief in God that is absolute? Or wants to know what you believe and you really don't know?

Some parents can be dismayed, feeling as if somehow they have failed in their attempts to teach freethinking and skepticism to their children. However, the reverse may actually be true.

Young children cannot help but develop an idea of an anthropomorphic deity. The “proof” seems to be all around them in the adults who talk casually about it (Grandma says God loves me), in the programs that air on television (*The Ten Commandments*), and in many other aspects of their world (pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving thanked God for their bountiful food).

Even if songs, movies, and television programs don't raise the issue of God—often with confusing imagery and misinformation—our children's playmates on the playground or in the daycare center will. And because children once viewed their parents as all-powerful, it is not hard for them to make the leap toward understanding an all-powerful God as a parental figure.

What we can do is stretch their idea of what God is and what the concept of God means. We can let our children know that God has meant many things to people in different times of history. We can share alternative images of the divine with them, like a Mother-God, the Universe-as-God, or many different Gods to express different ideas. We can let them know that some people believe that God is nature itself or that the spark of divine is in all of us.

In his book, [*When Children Ask About God: A Guide for Parents Who Don't Always Have All the Answers*](#), Rabbi Harold Kushner advises parents to teach children that the idea of God is difficult even for adults to comprehend. We can let them know that answers about God are tough to determine because of our limited capacity to know everything about the world. And when we emphasize that our ideas about God may change as we grow older, it may not limit their questions, but it will engage their young minds in the challenge of eventually developing their own beliefs about the world.

What we do not want to do, however, is inadvertently teach our children that questions about God are off limits. If we appear uncomfortable or give a short answer that limits further conversation, we communicate that this is a subject we are unwilling to talk about. When we do that, we not only teach our children that questions about God are bad or wrong, we also send them away to seek their answers from others. And those others may be more than willing to share their ideas about God with our children.